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OR,

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OUR COUSINS IN AUSTRALIA.

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OUR COUSINS IN AUSTRALIA;

OR,

REMINISCENCES OF SARAH NORRIS.

BY

ISABEL MASSARY,

AUTHOR OF "SOCIAL LIFE IN SYDNEY."

26344

EDINBURGH:

WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

1867.

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OUR COUSINS IN AUSTRALIA.

CHAPTER I.

THE VOYAGE OUT.

THE tea-table had just been cleared, and the maid-servant having left the room, I stirred the fire, arranged the light, and brought forward my work-basket preparatory to our evening reading. There is no hour so pleasant as that when the labours of the day being over, leisure is afforded to refresh the mind over some interesting book; but on this evening, although Joseph took up the volume I laid before him, and even found the place, he continued silent, gazing at the fire with a very abstracted countenance. We had got tea over early, and I was congratulating myself on the prospect of a chapter more than usual. Seeing, however, that something—probably some incident connected with his parish—had distracted his thoughts, I said, "Perhaps you are not disposed to read to-night, Joseph? if so, we can wait till another evening."

"It may be as well," he replied, "for I believe my thoughts are preoccupied; and I want to ask you a question,—you will think it a strange one, Sarah. Could you make up your mind to go to Australia?"

"To Australia, Joseph? certainly not."

"But, allow me to ask, do you say certainly not, merely on the impulse of the moment, because the idea is a startling one, or is your answer the result of a fixed determination?"

"I can scarcely say that I have a fixed determination on a subject of which I never until this moment thought; but have you any reason for asking?"

"Yes. I am now thirty-five, I have been a curate ten years, and have no better prospect of a living than I had the day I was ordained. Could I have remained here, among the people to whom I am attached and who regard me, I should have been contented, and even desire no change—but that, we know, cannot be. A few days ago I had a hint, from a person on whom I can rely, that the Bishop of New South Wales had spoken of me very kindly, and expressed a wish that I had chosen to go to that colony; I knew him slightly, you have heard me say, at college, and I think it very probable that, as he has a good opinion of me, he would bestow upon me something better than I can hope for by remaining in England."

"And I am sure you deserve something better than you have, Joseph," I said, abruptly, for the subject was a standing grievance.

"So you have often told me," replied he smiling; "but I fear that the only way in which your wishes for my

promotion are likely to be gratified is by doing what I speak of. But to waive that part of the subject—for I am not ambitious, and I am well aware that it is only for my sake you appear so, Sarah—my chief reason for taking up the idea is that I think I'd be more useful; clergymen are, I know, much wanted in Australia. I have thought of it a great deal, and the more I did so the fewer difficulties there seemed; indeed, I see none but what, as far as I am concerned, could be got over, but I could not make my mind up to go without you; even supposing you were to obtain a comfortable situation as governess, I could not do it."

My brother's tone was very earnest and affectionate, and he seemed anxious to hear how I would answer, but I only said that I must take time to consider a plan which involved so much change in our life.

"Certainly, certainly," replied Joseph, "I could not wish you to decide hastily, but there is one thing you must remember,—it is not as if we knew nothing of Australia; having relations there, you would not feel quite among strangers. Our cousin, Mr Dare, has sent us many kind messages, and I think we might reckon on a friend in him; you know we should want nothing but some one to vouch for our respectability, as so many odd people go out there."

"Very true," replied I, "Mr Dare would bear witness that we had not had a *free* passage out."

I spoke lightly, though the recollection that there was some person who would know something of us was really encouraging. The gentleman alluded to had been many

years established in Sydney, where he was now, we understood, a flourishing merchant. We had been acquainted with him previous to his leaving England, and since then he had sent us several little remembrances, and various kind messages, expressive of a hope that, should anything ever take us to the colony, and to the part where he resided, we would avail ourselves of his house. This offer we had, of course, received as it was meant, in a spirit of friendliness, and valued as demonstrative of good-will towards us, but little suspecting that we should ever put its sincerity to the test, for the last ten years of our lives had been spent in the retired country village of which my brother was curate, and until the appointment of a new rector, who did not require his assistance, we had no anticipation of being called upon to leave it, but looked forward to passing the remainder of our days, whether the period should be long or short, in the parish where our parents' bones were deposited, and when death summoned us away, to slumbering in the same churchyard. But since the arrival of the new incumbent of the rectory our prospects had assumed a different aspect; we found ourselves obliged to seek another home, and perhaps the necessity that forced us, under all circumstances, to change our habitation, prevented my brother's plan appearing altogether as startling as it might otherwise have done. I promised to consider it impartially, and being convinced by his manner that his wish to try his fortunes in Australia was not a mere whim that would pass away, I endeavoured, while doing so, to check the nervous fears that arose, as I thought of the

long sea voyage—the many dangers to be undergone before we could reach our destination, and the chance that, after all, we might be disappointed. I think now that I was very cowardly, and probably a person who possessed greater decision of character, and a bolder spirit, would have laughed at my doubts and despised my fears; but to a not very young woman, who seldom went six miles from home, the idea of traversing fifteen thousand miles of ocean was alarming; besides which, though I had connexions in New South Wales, I knew only the head of the family, and but little of the colony, which I understood to be peopled by convicts, and aborigines who were cannibals. But my affection for my brother prevailed; he had always been most considerate for my comfort, and it was my duty, as well as pleasure, to consult his happiness; and when next we spoke on the subject, his views not being altered, I cheerfully consented to what he wished.

Our departure being, therefore, decided on, I commenced actively to make preparations for the voyage, and collected all the information I could relative to the country that was to be our home in future. Joseph seemed so well pleased with what he was about, that I could not regret it, but made a point of looking on the brightest side of the prospect before me; and I found in this, as in every other case of which I have had experience, that an honest endeavour to be content with one's lot is rewarded with success. I soon imagined my brother in a pretty parsonage house, which, though humble, had all that is requisite for comfort; I fancied the little church of which he was the pastor, and thought

of him as beloved in his parish, advising the old, instructing the young, and comforting the sick and afflicted. And the picture had usually the addition of a little, bustling woman, who appeared to think herself of no small importance, as keeping everything tidy, and on whom Joseph often smiled with brotherly affection; not that I desired to prevent him marrying, but I had a sort of presentiment he would remain single, in which opinion, hitherto at all events, I have been justified. I had not more than enough time to complete our arrangements, and take leave of our friends, for when my brother had resolved on an action he was generally prompt in executing it; and in a very few weeks after our determination was fixed, we were on board a ship bound for Australia.

It was in vain, however, that I tried to believe my new situation agreeable; my utmost efforts to persuade myself that happiness was compatible with sea-sickness, perpetual rocking, and discomforts of every kind, were completely baffled; and, notwithstanding the kindness of my brother, who showed me every attention, I must confess that the first three weeks were unmitigatedly wretched; nor was it until nearly a month had elapsed that I was at all myself.

When we were in the latitude of the Canary Islands I ventured upon deck, and enjoyed a balminess of air of which in England I had had no experience. We were to stop nowhere, unless our supply of water ran short, but this day we were sufficiently near land for those who had good eyes to discern the Peak of Teneriffe. I am short-sighted, and being unpractised in the use of a tele-

scope; was obliged, though mortified at the incapacity which prevented me profiting by one of the few objects of interest on the voyage, to be contented with the accounts of others, and that which I was then reading, given by Holman, the blind traveller.

Among the passengers was a lady whom I understood to be the wife of a clergyman in Sydney, whither she was returning from a visit to England, with her two daughters, pleasing-looking girls of fifteen and sixteen. I had hitherto scarcely seen them, having been too unwell to join the party at meals in the cuddy; but this morning, as I sat on a hencoop, amusing myself watching the flying-fish that rose in little flights, (or shoals, what is the correct word?) out of the sparkling blue water, Mrs Hill came towards me, and kindly congratulated me on my recovery from sea-sickness. I had not before spoken to any stranger on board, except the captain, and was pleased with her frankness in addressing me, as well as with her appearance. She observed, that if this was my first voyage, the objects I was then regarding were probably new to me. I answered in the affirmative, adding in my homely way, "How remarkable it is that they, alone of all their species, are furnished with wings."

"Naturalists say," replied Mrs Hill, "that it is to enable them to escape from the dolphin, which are their enemies, and pursue them with great avidity."

"How curious," said I; "how wonderfully does the Creator provide for the safety of the meanest of His creatures."

Mrs Hill smiled gently, and desiring her daughters to walk up and down the poop, took a seat beside me, when we soon fell into an easy flow of conversation. As was most natural, it turned upon Australia; and on Mrs Hill mentioning that Sydney was her home, I could not refrain from saying how much I wished that I had likewise some acquaintance with the colony for which we were bound, as I felt anxious respecting the life I was to lead.

"Concerning the mode of life in Sydney at all events," remarked Mrs Hill, "there are no grounds for misgivings whatever. Except such immaterial differences as the climate makes desirable, you will find it differs very little from what you have been accustomed to in England; and if you consider it must be so, there is, both in Sydney and in the interior, a great deal of what must anywhere be called good society. The younger branches of good, in some cases of noble, families go out there, and they, of course, take with them the habits and manners to which they have been used." There was an obvious good sense in this, and my new acquaintance continued. "Nor are we without gaiety and fashionable amusements. During the season, that is the cool weather, there are numerous balls and handsome dinner-parties, which are in every respect like those given by persons of similar standing in our own country."

I was less personally interested in the account of society than most persons would have been, for I had never had the habit of going about much, and infinitely preferred the quiet of home to any gaiety that could be offered me;

but I was glad to pick up every kind of information; and when at last Mrs Hill rose to join her daughters, I found myself not only enlightened, but my mind set at ease on many points connected with a residence in the colony.

The acquaintance thus commenced afforded me great pleasure; Mrs Hill was a truly excellent person, and as she and her daughters were the only lady passengers besides myself, we mutally sought each other's society; we generally sat together upon deck, while the young ladies paced up and down before us, and sometimes she would invite me to spend an hour in her cabin between dinner and tea, when it was not sufficiently dark for candles, but the twilight too far gone to admit of reading or work as an occupation, and the time so spent always passed pleasantly. I liked also to converse with the girls; having been educated for a governess, though I had been in only one situation, I was accustomed to observe all young people with interest. I liked to watch the disposition, and gather from the germs of qualities, then visible, what the future character was likely to prove. The Misses Hill gave the promise of much that is desirable; they were well brought up, as indeed how could they be otherwise with such a mother, and such a father as I had reason to believe Mr Hill to be? Fanny, the youngest, on account of whose health they had gone home, was of a gentle, thoughtful disposition, caused no doubt in a great measure by the extreme delicacy of her constitution, which debarred her from many amusements suitable to her age; but her sister, Louisa, a fine bloom-

ing girl, had much natural vivacity, which was, however, always restrained within the bounds of modesty and propriety. Regarding them as most favourable specimens of young colonists, I frequently indulged a hope my youthful relations might resemble them. Of the number or ages of Mr Dare's children I was not informed. I had heard of the birth of one daughter, but not whether any others had succeeded her; and one day I asked Mrs Hill if she was acquainted with the family. It was then about the middle of the voyage, and by that time we were tolerably intimate, although our conversation, when upon society, had hitherto dealt only in generalities.

"Is it Mr Godfrey Dare, you speak of?" she inquired, "the member for"——

"I did not know he is in the Legislative Council," I answered; "but I think there can hardly be two Mr Dares of the same Christian name. The gentleman I speak of is a merchant."

"Yes; no doubt it is the same. Oh! they are very gay people indeed; they reside at a beautiful place, about a mile out of Sydney, belonging to Mr Dare, and there is no family that holds a more prominent position in the first society."

I was rather surprised to hear this account, and perhaps, with the selfishness that exists more or less in every human heart, not quite pleased, for I reflected that as Joseph and I were qualified neither by inclination nor acquirements to assume a place in fashionable society, the hindrances in the way of intercourse with our relatives they, at all events, might not be inclined to

surmount, especially as there were no ties of real friendship, and the cousinship, though I have thus termed the connexion, was many degrees removed.

"Mr Dare," I observed, "used to be esteemed a man of superior ability?"

"He is, no doubt," replied my friend, "a man of superior ability and enlarged views; but the fault which is so apt to ensnare one in a place where the prime object of nearly every person is to make money, has, I fear, of late years beset him—the cares of this world absorb his thoughts; you excuse my speaking freely, Miss Norris?"

I replied that, without frankness of speech, I could imagine no pleasure in conversation, and begged her not to hesitate using it towards me while speaking of my relations. I inquired what kind of woman Mrs Dare was, for in her I, of course, felt a certain interest.

"Using the liberty you give me, then," replied Mrs Hill, "it appears to me that Mrs Dare is easiest described as having no character at all. She was, as you are probably aware, the daughter of a high colonial dignitary, so that, in a worldly point of view, Mr Dare cannot be said to have made other than a good marriage; she is also very handsome, and always remarkably well dressed, but, conscious of being so, she gives little thought to anything beyond. Her health is unfortunately very bad, which, joined to natural indolence, is her excuse for leading an unusually self-indulgent, luxurious life; she has never been in England, and is, as you will find, a very ordinary specimen of the last generation of colonists."

I was sorry to receive such an account, knowing that, with so inefficient a parent, it was scarcely possible the children should in any degree resemble those who enjoyed the advantage of a mother's judicious superintendence, and I asked, "Is there more than one daughter?"

"No; only one, a nice-looking girl, about the age of Fanny, and a little boy, several years younger."

"And how are they brought up?"

"Really, I am scarcely sufficiently acquainted with the family to express an opinion; but I should think they are being well brought up. Mr Dare was very anxious they should be so, and Miss Dare had, when I knew them, always a resident governess, (she was one of the few young ladies who had,) and the best masters for different accomplishments that could be procured, though further than that I don't know."

The descriptions one receives of an unknown land of course depend very much on the disposition of the individual who gives them, and I was particularly fortunate in my principal authority. Mrs Hill was not a colonist, but Australia was her home; there she had met, and been united to Mr Hill; there her children were growing up, and with Sydney were connected the associations of her youth and the happiness of her maturer life. She loved the colony, and wished to prepossess me favourably, though, as she had too much judgment to run into an excess of partiality, she drew no pictures the reality of which must eventually disappoint me. It was not, however, solely to her that we were indebted for information, a good deal we obtained from books we

brought with us, and to read which we applied ourselves assiduously, finding them a great resource to pass away the time. There was not much difficulty in spending the days, for though monotonous they were not tedious, and almost imperceptibly the long four months on which we had reckoned glided away. We had a good ship, and with the exception of one storm, rounding the Cape of Good Hope, fine weather and fair winds.

As the time of landing drew near, my thoughts were diverted from the new things we were to see to the new people we were to meet, and I tried to fill up the outline of my cousin's family given me by Mrs Hill, and to imagine the kind of reception they would give us; but my anticipations shared the fate of most others founded only on fancy, they proved totally fallacious. It was about the middle of October when we got into Bass's Straits, and the climate there was exceedingly enjoyable; the sea was so calm, and the sky without a cloud, and while the gentlemen of our party amused themselves fishing for baracouta, Fanny Hill and I found employment for our pencils, sketching the various groups of rocks and islands as they came in sight. Among the former, none struck me so much as "Judgment Rock," which, rising perpendicularly out of the sea, had a most formidable appearance. Kent's Group also makes a pretty object in my sketch-book, and I value them as reminiscences of that part of my voyage.

At length the captain began to speak confidently of the time of landing, and the Misses Hill eagerly counted the days, deducting each night one from the number

which they reckoned must elapse before they should again see their father; but the expedient was far from a good one, and the last week on board seemed to lag more heavily than all that had preceded it. Poor Mrs Hill became anxious and nervous whenever her husband's name was mentioned; he had been in not very robust health when they parted, and, less sanguine than her daughters, it required small penetration to discover that she dreaded lest, instead of the meeting to which they looked forward without a fear of disappointment, some bad news should await them. They had a little brother, also, of whom they were very fond, and talked a great deal, though a similar feeling to that which occasioned the mother to sigh and look grave, when they wondered whether Frank was much grown and improved, would sometimes make me almost wish that Fanny was less hopeful and Louisa less gay on the subject.

It was between eight and nine o'clock one evening, when Joseph came into my cabin, saying, "Come on deck, Sarah, Sydney Heads are in sight." I quickly put on my bonnet, and ascended the companion-ladder, but the night was dark and stormy, and nothing was to be distinguished, save the revolving light on the South Head, and the stern outline of an iron-bound coast. The pilot came on board, and a scene of noise and bustle ensued, which made me feel more uncomfortable than I had done since the very beginning. The promptitude with which his orders were given, the expression of anxiety on the captain's face, and the watchfulness

of those of the gentlemen present who understood what was going on, all suggested an idea of danger, of which, in spite of Mrs Hill's assurance that it was, she believed, needless, I could not divest myself, and on her proposing to retire to her cabin, I willingly assented. She was quite right, my alarm was without cause; and having spent an hour with her, and heard Louisa read the evening lesson from the Bible, which had a wonderful effect in composing my spirits, I took leave of them, and went to rest. About the middle of the night the rushing of the cable announced that we were at anchor.

Before breakfast the following morning Mrs Hill came to the door of my cabin to bid me adieu, for her husband and son were already arrived, and they were to leave the vessel immediately. I was truly glad to hear that Mr Hill and the little boy were both well, but I could not part with my kind friend without regret, and tears involuntarily filled my eyes as I pressed her hand, and said, "Farewell, may God bless you, Mrs Hill."

"Thank you, Miss Norris," was the reply, "but do not say 'farewell;' we shall meet frequently in Sydney."

"Do you really think so?"

"I trust so," answered Mrs Hill, smiling, "if all goes well. You will visit me on the north shore, and if you do not come soon, I shall write, or call to see you; you must be sure to let me know the address of your lodgings."

I was very grateful for the kindness with which this was said, and having taken leave of the girls, I saw a

boat, containing the whole party, pass under the stern a few minutes afterwards.

Shortly after breakfast, my brother likewise landed to seek for some suitable accommodation, while I remained on board until his return, which he promised should be as speedy as possible.

CHAPTER II.

LANDING IN SYDNEY.

"COME, Sarah, are you ready? these packages all addressed? nothing more to do, I hope?" were my brother's first inquiries, in a quicker tone than his usual, on re-entering my cabin, in a great bustle. "Mr Dare's carriage is waiting on the wharf to take us straight to his house, and must on no account be detained."

Mr Dare's carriage waiting on the wharf! but there was no time to ask questions; Joseph stood by, hurrying my last little preparations; we locked the cabin door, took leave of the captain in passing through the cuddy; I was lowered into the boat, and it was not until I found myself seated in a very elegant open carriage, and driving rapidly through the streets of Sydney, that I had opportunity to say, "How did all this come about, Joseph?"

"Why," replied Joseph, "when I began to look about me I found myself in a greater difficulty than I had expected; the lodgings had, for the most part, a dirty,

uncomfortable appearance, besides being very high-priced, and the hotels were too expensive to be thought of. I supposed I had not gone to the right places, and that the best way would be to follow the captain's advice, and ask Mr Dare to direct me where to go; accordingly I went to his office in Pitt Street, where I sent in my card; he came to me with it in his hand, saying, 'Mr Norris, any relation to Mr Joseph Norris?' 'I am Joseph Norris,' I replied, whereupon he extended his hand, and said, in the kindest manner, that he was glad to see me, and wondered how he had not recognised me at first. He asked if I had come to try my fortunes out here, and whether I was alone, or had brought a wife. Not a wife, I said, my sister has accompanied me, and explained that you were remaining on board until I had procured lodgings, and that it was to ask his advice where to apply for respectable apartments, that I had taken the liberty of calling on him so soon. But he would not hear of our going into lodgings; there was plenty of room in his house, and he and Mrs Dare would have pleasure in receiving us as guests for as long as was convenient to ourselves. The offer was made in a way that I could not refuse it, and he further added, 'The carriage happens to be in town this morning, so if you will return for your sister it shall await you on the wharf, and I will accompany you to the Pines, and introduce you to Mrs Dare.'"

My brother had just concluded this account of Mr Dare's kindness, which was so much greater than we could have expected, when the carriage stopped at the

office. We had not many minutes to wait before my cousin made his appearance; a highly gentlemanly-looking person, with a grave intellectual countenance, strangely marked with lines of thought and care. He gave me a cordial welcome, and having desired the coachman to drive home, spoke of the pleasure it afforded him to receive us at his house. I was truly grateful for such a reception, and yet there was something in his manner that prevented me feeling at ease in his company; there was in all he uttered the *je ne sais quoi* that stamps the man of the world and of superior ability, and my feeling of shyness rose to a painful degree as the conviction that my relations were greater people than I had been aware of, broke upon me at the moment of coming in sight of a large and very handsome white stone house, standing in its own grounds. The deep veranda, which surrounded three sides, was lined with stages of choice plants in bloom, intermingled with cages and stands for birds of every variety of gorgeous plumage; the Venetian blinds of all the windows were closed, the thermometer being upwards of 80°, and the drawing-room, into which we were conducted, was so dark as to preclude the possibility of any occupation except such as requires least light.

But the lady who was reclining on a sofa at one end was quite unemployed, and her appearance led one to suppose she was rarely otherwise. She was very handsome, and expensively dressed, and had the indolent, self-indulgent air of a person accustomed to a life of idleness and luxury. Her only companion was a little boy of nine or ten years old, arrayed in very summerish

garments of white cotton, who, from his resemblance to her, I at once guessed to be her son.

Mrs Dare's manner was less agreeable than her husband's: there was a want of cordiality about it, and though I afterwards found that her habitual address was cold and indifferent, on a first reception it was chilling. She said, however, that she would be happy to see us for as long as it suited us to remain, and during the next half-hour languidly did her part towards sustaining conversation, for which our voyage supplied the chief materials. I took advantage of one of the many pauses to inquire for Miss Dare, hoping that she was well. "Oh, yes, she is quite well, thank you," replied Mrs Dare; "I have not seen her to-day, but I suppose she and her governess will make their appearance at luncheon."

Shortly afterwards we were summoned to the dining-room, where an elegant luncheon, including a variety of beautiful fruit, was laid out. We had just taken our places at table when Miss Dare entered; her governess was not with her, and her father inquiring for the lady, she replied that she had gone out to spend the day. Mr Dare made no remark, but introduced his daughter to us.

Christina Dare was really only fourteen, but, as is generally the case with young people born in this colony, in appearance and manner at least two years older. She resembled, on the whole, her father far more than her mother, for although she inherited from the latter a soft glowing complexion and bright fair hair, which I thought exceedingly beautiful, falling over her shoulders in long natural ringlets, her countenance betokened a very dif-

ferent character. There was none of Mrs Dare's feebleness of intellect in the expression; on the contrary, the clear open brow and brilliant dark eyes indicated rather the superior abilities of her father, and although there was in her deportment a degree of carelessness and self-confidence which told of a will little accustomed to be restrained, I could not but regard her as a striking and prepossessing-looking girl. She spoke to us frankly, and without any of the shyness we so often see in English girls of her age.

An hour or two after luncheon, Joseph returned on board the vessel to see about our luggage, while Mrs Dare at the same time invited me to accompany her in a drive. I was curious to see something of Sydney, and as we got into the carriage Miss Christina asked where we were to go.

"Wherever you like, my dear," was Mrs Dare's reply.

"Then suppose," said her daughter, goodnaturedly, "we go to the Government Gardens; Miss Norris, I am sure, will like to see them."

"It will give me great pleasure," said I; "I have heard they are a great credit to Sydney; Mrs Hill described them to me." Mrs Dare accordingly gave the order that we should drive to the gates of the Botanical Gardens, and would there alight; but Master Albert exclaimed, "Oh, why go to those stupid gardens? It is much nicer to go along the South Head road, and walk on the beach at Rose Bay."

"Do you think so?" said Mrs Dare; "to Rose Bay then."

I had noticed during luncheon an inclination on the part of the young people to squabble and oppose each other, and that Mrs Dare invariably sided with her son. The drive was amusing, for though Mrs Dare was not a bit more conversable than she had been previously, her daughter was very lively, and gave me a great deal of local information. The tide was high, so Albert was disappointed of his walk on the sand, but we stopped to enjoy the sea breeze.

"This is very lovely," I said, after gazing for some minutes on the view of the harbour; "I do not remember to have ever seen anything that equals this."

"Probably not," observed Mrs Dare. "I believe there is nothing in England to compare with some of the views of this country. Our harbour is called the finest in the world."

"But, Miss Christina," I resumed, looking with less pleasure on the barren tract of country around, "is all the wood of this dull hue?"

"All about Sydney," was her reply, "the gum-trees are of that dingy green, and you see little else."

"I have yet to learn what gum-trees are," I observed, smiling; "but there must be a terrible want of freshness in the foliage."

"Are the English scrubs not like that?"

"The summer foliage of our *forests*," I replied—"I never heard them called scrubs—is of a fresh soft green."

"But your trees cast their leaves, and are quite naked in winter, which ours never are; so we have the advantage after all," said Mrs Dare, who, I remarked, was very

patriotic, and on all possible occasions maintained the superiority of the colony.

Mr Dare and his wife were this evening engaged to dine at Government House; so, with many polite apologies for leaving us, they commended us to the care of our young relations. The governess was still from home; and Miss Dare said she went out a great deal, quite as often as her papa and mamma, and sometimes, though not frequently, with them. This appeared to me very strange, at least very different from what governesses in my country are used to; and I could not help thinking that such a plan, if it rendered the life of the instructress less irksome, is far from advantageous to the pupils, who thus must often be deprived of all surveillance in hours of recreation. I was not without a suspicion that but for us there would have been a visit paid by our young cousins to the kitchen, and more than enough talking and gossipping with the servants. As it was, there was nothing to object to, their deficiency of reserve or shyness made it very easy to get on with them. We pleased them by admiring their pet birds; and Joseph has particularly the art of rendering himself agreeable to young people. Christina and her brother were not interested, in a general way, in facts relating to the mother country, not so much so as might have been expected; but he contrived to fix their attention by certain anecdotes. In Albert's good graces he secured a place by describing the flying fish and nautili of the tropics; and Miss Dare asked questions about the catching of a shark that had amused the gentlemen on board ship one day when we

were becalmed on the line. Had their respective inquiries been reversed, they would have befitted more a young lady and gentleman; but I afterwards found they were very characteristic. Amusing, and being amused, our youthful host and hostess were in high good humour, and consequently showed to advantage.

That night my reflections were very peaceful and pleasant. On a degree of notice from my cousin Dare we had indeed reckoned, but for the extreme kindness we experienced we had not for a moment hoped; and as I laid my head upon the pillow, it was with a deep feeling of gratitude to Heaven, who had raised up to my poor brother and myself friends in the far land to which I had come in deep fear and trembling.

CHAPTER III.

AN UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL.

AT breakfast, which was at eight o'clock, Mrs Dare was not present, and I heard that she seldom left her room until a much later hour. The governess, however, made her appearance—a gaily dressed young lady, who looked about as unfit to be the director of a nearly grown-up girl as can be well imagined. In the plans which had led us to this colony Mr Dare was most kindly interested; and on my brother mentioning that his first business must be to call on the Bishop this morning, he observed, that as far as he knew, there was not much chance of his being offered a living in or near Sydney; but in many of the remote districts clergymen were sadly wanted, and he had no doubt his services would be promptly put in requisition.

Mr Dare went to his office after breakfast, and usually did not return till evening. As he took leave of us, he observed—

"Mrs Dare is not very strong, Miss Norris, and perhaps may not be able to enjoy much of your company

this morning; but Christina and Miss Sharp will take excellent care of you."

"Are you fond of walking, Miss Norris?" asked Miss Dare; "because if you are, we can go to the Botanical Gardens; I want to show you some of the plants which papa says do not grow in England."

"If you mean to walk," said Mr Dare, "you had better go early, for Miss Norris is not used to our sun."

"We will go at once," answered his daughter. "Miss Sharp, will you get ready?"

"Will you not practice your music first, Miss Christina?" said the governess.

"No, I will put that off till we come back; so pray be quick and get ready."

This was a somewhat unceremonious way of addressing her governess, and I remarked that the arrangement was made without any reference to Miss Sharp. I began to have a suspicion that Miss Christina was very independent, and a little self-willed, but I kept my thought to myself, and soon we were on our way to the gardens.

In the course of this walk I saw a good deal that was new to me in the way of things peculiar to the colony, and both my companions were communicative and amusing. Overhead was a sky more cloudlessly blue than I had ever seen, and I was conscious of a peculiarly exhilarating feeling in the air, which I have since heard is commonly acknowledged, and due to the extremely rarefied nature of the atmosphere. The buildings of Sydney did not strike me as being different in character from those of an English town, except that most of the

houses were furnished with verandas; many were very handsome, especially the detached villas, but the streets had a certain irregularity which detracted from their appearance; a large and well-finished house was seen to a disadvantage from being placed next one of very inferior description, and a street that was commenced of handsome dwellings dwindled away into comparatively mean tenements. On the whole, however, there was far less than I had anticipated to remind a stranger of his distance from home until we reached the gates of the domain; there not only the trees but the very grass looked different, and growing in wild profusion were plants of which in England we cherish the shabbiest slips in greenhouses; the beautiful white mimosa—a sheet of blossoms—burst upon my view in bushes ten feet in height, and in half an hour I gathered a bouquet of epacris and glycene, for which in Covent Garden we would pay at least a guinea. The bottle-brush, too, in spite of the vulgarity of its name, immediately attracted my attention by the beauty as well the singularity of its appearance.

The Botanical Gardens Mrs Hill had praised to me as being laid out with great taste, but I am not sure that my first impression was free from disappointment; not in the flowers, for they were beautiful, and with the greatest interest I examined the coral-tree, whose brilliant scarlet blossoms, growing in a tuft at the point of each naked branch, lack the relief of green leaves; the ginger-plant, the glorious bignonia in its numerous variety, and others I cannot enumerate, but the beds

had a parched and arid look, partly, I suppose, from the nature of the soil, and inevitable, perhaps, from the drying tendency of the climate.

Having explored the whole of the upper garden, we seated ourselves for a few minutes on a bench shaded by a clump of bamboos. When I inquired, "Have we seen the whole garden? I understood it was more extensive,"

"You have seen only half," replied Miss Sharp, who latterly had been in not the best possible humour, "there is another garden across that road; but, I am sure, we have walked quite enough for to-day."

"No, no, we have not," exclaimed her pupil; "we will go to the other, it is by far the prettiest, and Miss Norris must see it."

I replied that if Miss Sharp was tired, I was quite willing to put off this pleasure till another day. Christina, however, would not hear of returning until she had shown me all that was to be seen, and Miss Sharp, whom I perceived to be at the mercy of her pupil, was reluctantly obliged to comply, muttering as we proceeded,

"Miss Christina thinks of no one's convenience but her own, and I am sure Miss Norris will say that any day she has been up till two in the morning at a ball, she has not been much inclined for a long walk."

"I am not in the habit of going to balls," I replied, rather shocked at the dissipated hours which with this lady appeared nothing uncommon.

"Oh, perhaps, you consider them wrong?" said she, with an affected air.

"Not wrong in themselves," I replied, hesitating, "or in every situation."

"In what situation do you think they are wrong?"

"If you care for my opinion," I said, "I will be happy to give it you another time."

"But why not now, Miss Norris?" asked Christina.

"Because, my dear, excuse me, I do not think the subject is one that concerns you."

"I should so like to know, though," persisted Christina.

But Miss Sharp, tossing up her head, observed that she did not think she would trouble me for my opinion either now or at another time.

We had now entered the lower garden, and here I was really delighted, as, in addition to the rare plants, was a most beautiful view of the harbour and Government House; of the latter I promised myself the pleasure of some day making a sketch from this point, whence it showed to such advantage. I felt I should like to stroll half the morning by the water side, but I began to feel very tired, and the sun more powerful than was agreeable.

"I thought you English ladies were greater walkers than we colonists," observed Miss Dare.

"You forget," I replied, "that I have been four months without walking beyond the few yards of the deck; but for that, I could walk twice as far as we have been to-day, and not be the least fatigued."

The day was becoming exceedingly hot, so it was a satisfaction to reach home; and finding that Mrs Dare was engaged with some friends in the drawing-room, I asked and obtained permission to sit in the schoolroom

while Miss Dare pursued her studies, promising to be no interruption. I had thus an opportunity of judging somewhat of the intellectual calibre of a young person born and bred entirely in Australia, and I must say that if I thought little of Miss Sharp's system of instruction, I was quite surprised at the progress which, with her very slender advantages, Christina had made in the various branches of an accomplished education; a circumstance which gave me the first idea—confirmed by later observation—of the excellent natural capabilities of those born in this colony.

In the afternoon I had a conversation with Joseph, and heard the result of his interview with the Bishop. He had been received kindly, and with quite as much recollection of former acquaintance as could be expected. His lordship had it not in his power to offer him anything permanent in the vicinity of Sydney, but proposed that he should accept, in the meantime, a few months' occupation at Wollongong, the clergyman of which district was about to visit England on account of his health. This was satisfactory, as it relieved us from the necessity of encroaching on the hospitality so frankly extended to us. Wollongong was described as an extremely pretty place, and it was a comfort to know that we were to be within the bounds of civilisation.

We were to set out in little more than a week, and the intervening time slipped pleasantly away. In daily drives with Mrs Dare I made considerable acquaintance with the environs of Sydney, while Joseph continued a special favourite with the young people, who made him relate

them stories of what he had seen in England, or during the voyage, and in return brought him specimens of all the natural curiosities they could collect.

One afternoon, finding myself alone for a few minutes with Mr Dare in the veranda, I bethought me of asking about his brother, who was, what they call a "squatter" up the country. With Mr Henry Dare I had never been personally acquainted; he left England when a very young man, had married a lady possessed of some fortune, a cousin of his own, who joined him in Australia to fulfil her engagement, and had been for long a widower. In reply to my question, Mr Dare said, "My brother is a very prosperous man, and has been so for many years, his station is one of the finest on Stanley Downs." I was glad to hear this, and inquired whether he had any family.

"One boy, whom, I think, he rather mismanages; at least, I cannot suppose Mark naturally worse than others, yet he has given Henry great vexation; shockingly wild, and won't apply to study."

"Indeed, that is very sad, but I should think a Bush life is a disadvantage to a young person; it must be unfavourable to study."

"I don't know why it should," said Mr Dare. "Mark has greater advantages than he could have at any school in Sydney. His tutor is a classical scholar, a Cambridge man, and though I say there may be some fault in his father's conduct towards him, he has no excuse for not getting on well; but he never will study, and is always up to some prank or another—going out to hunt opos-

sums at night with the bullock drivers, and associates with a good-for-nothing young fellow, the overseer's son. My brother only lately found out all this, for Mr Mark knows how to keep his own counsel, and he is determined to try a change of system. The tutor is soon to leave, to set up a school in Sydney, and there is talk of the boy being sent with him."

Mr Dare looked really distressed as he gave this very unpromising account of his nephew; and as he ceased speaking, walked to the other end of the veranda to look for his horse. It was not yet brought from the stable, so he returned to me, and resumed, "Had Mark had sense to profit by them, he had, I think, greater advantages of education in the bush than he could have in Sydney, for there he has the whole attention of his tutor, while here we could not expect the man to be better than other masters and governesses, who neglect their pupils to visit their friends."

Mr Dare went on to speak of the annoyance this very failing in his daughter's governess caused himself, and it unfortunately happened that while the subject was on the carpet the house door opened, and Miss Sharp, very gaily dressed, issued forth.

"There is an example, you see," said he; "gone out, no doubt, to spend the day, and Christina is left to her own devices; but there is no use talking about it, it is an evil, I fear, without remedy; they are all alike."

"Not quite, I should hope," I replied; "there are surely some governesses in the colony who have juster views of the duties of their situation; I sometimes think

that, should Joseph go to the interior, I shall endeavour to obtain a situation in some gentleman's family, and I should certainly not desire, or indeed choose, to go out."

"Indeed! would you not?" said Mr Dare. "But you would change your mind when you had been a short time in a situation."

"Excuse me, sir, I think I know my own mind; on that subject, at least, I feel pretty sure of not changing."

Mr Dare's horse at this moment was led round, and our conversation was interrupted, though, as he mounted, he observed, "It would be a great, an inestimable advantage to your pupils."

He rode away, and I thought no more of what had passed until a few mornings subsequently, when, being in my room after breakfast, Miss Dare brought me a message that her father would be glad, if I were not particularly engaged, of a few minutes conversation with me in the dining-room.

"You will excuse me, Miss Norris," were his first words, "but there is a little matter on which we wish to consult you; Mrs Dare, being unwell this morning, has deputed me to open it to you." He offered me a chair as he spoke, and taking a seat himself, proceeded, "You intend to accompany your brother to Wollongong, Miss Norris?"

"Yes, it is my intention to do so," I replied, rather surprised that he began to speak of my own affairs.

"And, allow me to ask, do you anticipate much pleasure in doing so?"

"None," I answered, "beyond the comfort of being

with my brother, for I am told that I shall have a somewhat uncomfortable residence, and be left a great deal alone; but it is, of course, most natural for me to go with Joseph."

"To come at once to the point, then," said Mr Dare, "would it cost you much to alter your plans, and remain in our family?"

I was startled, but before I could reply he continued—

"You are probably not aware that Miss Sharp is about to quit us; she announced last night, rather abruptly, that she is going to be married, and must leave in three days; we of course could offer no objections, and, indeed, could we obtain what we wish, we should very far from regret her. Will you consent to remain in our family; you know now what we are, receiving every kindness and attention as a relative, and be Christina's governess, and superintend her general conduct?"

"Were I to undertake the one I should consider the other part of my duty," I observed, interrupting him.

"It was," said he, "seeing how much more enlarged a view than is common in this colony you take of the duties of a governess, and how completely it coincides with my own, that first suggested this to me; and I feel that, if you are induced to consent, Christina will have a chance of growing up a better-informed, as well as more amiable woman than in the hands of any other lady I am likely to meet with here."

"You are very good," I replied; "I am sincerely gratified by your opinion; but I hope you will not consider me ungrateful if I ask for a few hours to reflect on

your proposal; I shall like to speak it over with my brother."

"Of course," said Mr Dare, "I should be sorry you gave hastily any answer of which you might afterwards repent. Take twenty-four hours to think of it; longer if you like; your brother, I believe, does not go until Saturday, this is only Wednesday."

"Thank you; but I think twenty-four hours will be sufficient; this time to-morrow I shall be prepared with my answer."

On this conversation I thought seriously, and to the best of my ability weighed the pros and cons of the question. There was much in favour of accepting the proposal, though there was also something against it. My hesitation was not on Joseph's account, for I had heard that his duties would take him a great deal from home, and I could be of little real use to him; nor did it arise from the knowledge that I must not judge of the comfort I should find in my cousin Dare's house from that which I had hitherto experienced. I was aware that when receiving a salary, and acting as governess, I must occupy a very subordinate situation to that which I enjoyed as guest, and I had no grounds for believing that, when the novelty of the new instructress was over, Miss Dare would treat me in any way better or differently than she did Miss Sharp; yet all this I regarded lightly, and my scruples rested on an entirely different point, and on one only. I had doubts whether I was fit for the situation; whether my easy, perhaps *weakly* yielding character would, if brought to any trial, be able to cope

with the bold, decided spirit of Christina. I have since had deep cause to lament that I allowed this objection to be overcome, and yet I do not know that, on the whole, I should regret my decision; be that as it may, partly conquering the fears in my own mind, and partly urged by my brother, who had doubts of my being comfortable at Wollongong, and approved the plan, I decided to remain.

When I gave my answer to Mr Dare, and stated what had been my difficulty, he only smiled, saying, "Christina is very lively, but I think I may say she is a good girl; and if you ever find her at all unmanageable you have only to speak to her mother; she will put everything right. I would be happy to refer you to myself, but I am so engaged with business."

I had far rather been desired to refer to himself, but his reason was of course unanswerable; and when he went on to say that his daughter would be quite sensible of the respect she owed me, with various other polite speeches of the same tendency, I began to hope that I should find Miss Christina more tractable than I at present anticipated, and that there never would be occasion to back up my own with any superior authority.

The arrangements thus far concluded, all else was soon settled. Mrs Dare expressed herself pleased; Miss Sharp was evidently glad that her place had been so quickly filled, as she was relieved from the apprehension of opposition to her leaving when she wished, and the same day on which she took her departure Joseph set out for Wollongong.

CHAPTER IV.

I TAKE OFFICE.

BEING now installed in my new office, I found the advantage of having passed previously a little time in the family, as I was thus enabled to form a tolerably just estimate of the different characters with which I was brought in contact. With Mrs Dare I was not indeed more intimate than I had been the first day we met; but this was not that she was in any way repulsive, but simply that she was a person to be understood at once; having no depth of feeling or qualities beyond what might be known to her most casual acquaintances. Her children she injudiciously indulged, not, in the case of Christina, whatever it might be in that of Albert, so much from over-fondness as because she wanted energy to restrain them properly. This spoiling, which is always attended with more or less evil consequences in young people, had had in them an equal though very different effect. In Albert it increased a fretfulness of disposition which had, no doubt, first arisen from the delicacy of his constitution, and now accus-

tomed to have his own way in almost everything, he could not put up with the smallest opposition good humouredly, and was generally very troublesome to whoever he was with. I had a sort of charge of him also; he did his lessons with me, although in his play-hours his mother kept him a good deal with herself.

Miss Dare had far more character than her brother, and consequently more capability for both good and evil. She was frank, generous, and kind-hearted, but impetuous, inconsiderate of others, and so fond of excitement, that she was ready to catch at any amusement, right or wrong, that came in her way. I suggested one day to Mrs Dare that as Albert was too childish to be all that Christina required in a friend, it would conduce very much to her happiness to be allowed to associate with some young ladies of her own age; but Mrs Dare never would discuss any matter satisfactorily, and the utmost she said was, "Oh, does Christina want companions? I am sure I should have no objection, if I knew whom she could have."

To Christina herself I mentioned the Miss Hills as girls whom I thought she would like, but she did not second my idea. She had been acquainted with them slightly before they went to England, and declared they were very *slow* girls.

I had been some weeks in the family before I saw anything of the Hills, for though Mrs Dare invited me to accompany her in a call a few days after I was established as governess, Miss Christina objected to give up our usual afternoon walk. I was very anxious to fulfil

my promise of visiting my friend on the North Shore, and could not but regard this opposition as a great want of consideration on the part of my pupil. I am, however, in the habit of repressing my own wishes. Mrs Dare went alone, and I contented myself with the prospect of seeing Mrs Hill when she should return the call, which I had no doubt she would do shortly.

On the departure of Miss Sharp, various changes were instituted in the school-room arrangements. In consequence of Christina remarking that her mamma was always too late for luncheon, it was settled that we should be in future independent of her, and dine, as well as sup, in our own apartment. We were thus often left to ourselves the whole day, for though generally invited to drive, Miss Dare so much preferred pedestrian to carriage exercise that we mostly walked. She was fond of long rambles, and I should have had pleasure in gratifying her, had not her love of adventure kept my fears constantly on the *qui vive.* If she wished for any particular flower or shell, she did not care in how impracticable a place it grew, and when terrified to see her descend slippery rocks, or leap across chasms on the sea-shore, I remonstrated, she would only laugh, and persevere in her own way. Putting, however, such pieces of self-will out of the question, I found her an agreeable and intelligent companion. I had no trouble in teaching her, for she applied diligently to her studies; and on that subject, which, to a governess, is of such lively interest, I had reason to be most fully satisfied. She also, I believe, was contented with the change, and once paid me the compliment of

saying it was a comfort to have a governess who had some variety of ideas in her head instead of *that goose* Miss Sharp.

A week or so after Mrs Dare's call to the North Shore, I was busy with the studies in the school-room, when a message was brought me that Mrs Hill was in the drawing-room. Miss Dare was desired to accompany me to see the young ladies, who were with their mother. Mrs Hill met me in the most friendly manner, reproaching me for not having been to visit her. After sitting a while, conversing on the topics of the day, she again turned to me, and begged me to name a day that I could spend with her at her house. It was of course necessary that I should decline, and Mrs Dare being at the moment intent on fastening her bracelet, and apparently quite abstracted from the company, I took the opportunity to mention, in a low voice, that I was now Miss Dare's governess, and my time was therefore not at my own disposal.

"Miss Dare would accompany you, perhaps?" suggested Mrs Hill. This proposition pleased me, for more reasons than one, whereupon she added aloud, "Mrs Dare, I am going to ask a favour, which is, that you will allow Miss Dare to spend a day, a long day, if agreeable to herself, with my daughters. Miss Norris has kindly said she will accompany her."

"Oh, Miss Norris can go wherever she pleases," replied Mrs Dare, "but, I think not Christina; crossing the water is such a bore."

"To a person in your delicate health, no doubt," said

Mrs Hill; "but I daresay Miss Dare will not mind it."

Christina had meanwhile been entertaining the Miss Hills at the further end of the room, and I suppose had discovered that she was wrong in setting them down as slow girls, (whatever that expression might mean,) for on hearing this invitation given, she ran across the room to her mother, saying she would like to go of all things. But Mrs Dare, although she had declared but a few days previously that she would be happy to allow her daughter companions, now that the opportunity offered, evaded it with, "My dear, it would not be at all convenient; now don't be troublesome, Christina."

Then, again addressing Mrs Hill, "You are very good, and perhaps some day we may manage it, but certainly not at present."

Christina returned to her seat disappointed; and this example sufficed to show me how little use there was in any appeal to Mrs Dare. When Mrs Hill rose to take leave, which she did soon afterwards, she said to me,—

"I will not urge you further, for I respect your motives; but remember, that whenever you feel yourself at liberty, we shall be most happy to see you."

My answer was expressive of the gratitude I sincerely felt, for I had often heard that ship-board intimacies generally drop as soon as the parties land, and had scarcely hoped ours was to prove an exception.

Mr Dare's was a very gay house—they received a great deal of company, and went a great deal out. The evenings I always spent with the young people in the draw-

ing-room, and came to know, at least by sight, the greater number of Mrs Dare's acquaintance; but this was all I saw of society, though I heard a good deal of what passed, through Christina, who had a wonderful talent for picking up and retailing gossip. About this time there arrived from Van Diemen's land a family who settled at Wooloomooloo, under rather peculiar circumstances. Information respecting them was not among that which Miss Dare imparted to me; nevertheless, they occupy so important a place in my reminiscences, that, instead of deferring until I had personally something to do with them, I shall here mention the impression they made on their arrival.

The party consisted of a widow lady, of singularly pleasing personal appearance; her two grown-up, though young and pretty daughters, and a son of eighteen or nineteen, in the Navy, who, his ship being in harbour, was a good deal at home. They settled in one of the prettiest of the cottages, and their establishment, though arranged with reference to economy, was neat and proper. But they brought no letters of introduction, and while, in consequence, no one called on them, the gossips of Sydney were not slow to put about stories to their disadvantage. Some said that Mrs Philipson was not a nice person, and others that the son was very good for nothing. With regard to the latter, this report was soon proved perfectly true, but it would be hard to judge of the whole family by one member, to condemn the young ladies because their brother was a scamp. So it might be supposed people would argue of a family, the daugh-

ters of which were quite pretty enough to shine in the Sydney ball-rooms; and it seemed, indeed, impossible to believe harm of such a woman as was the mother. A countenance more interesting, without being perfectly beautiful, I never saw; its regular oval, delicate features, and soft brunette complexion; all gave an idea of refinement, and even high breeding, while the sweet, low tones of her voice accorded well with her widow's dress, her pensive smile, and the look of thought which habitually rested on the calm open brow. A constant attendant at church, and a willing subscriber to the various charities, although it was with the air of one whose means were less liberal than her wishes, it would appear that if any could escape the shafts of malice, it should be Mrs Philipson. The eldest daughter had finely-formed features, and a brilliantly-fair complexion; and, notwithstanding the former wore a not very pleasing expression, and the latter was rather faded, she was, with the addition of a tall erect figure, a handsome, showy girl. The younger was much less *prononcée*. She was only sixteen, and it was not difficult to imagine that her bright bloom and fair sunny ringlets might be exceedingly attractive to any one who did not regard intellect and the higher qualities of character above gentleness and good humour.

I had now been at the Pines some time, and had fallen into all the ways of the house. I saw how much my pupils and myself were separated from the rest of the family, and how little there was to vary the monotony of Christina's life; for Mr Dare disapproved of the custom so common in the colony of girls of her age mingling in

society, and yet did not furnish her with any suitable amusement at home. Frequently she would pore over her books longer than I thought good for her health; and if I remarked that she was getting too fond of study, would reply, "But what can I do, Miss Norris, when I am not busy? I am so tired of those everlasting walks in the domain." Unfortunately she had not a friend in either her father or mother. The latter had never tried, and probably did not know, how to win her affection; and the former, absorbed in business, looked on her as a child.

One morning at breakfast Mr Dare received a letter, the perusal of which seemed to interest him, and on finishing it he said to his wife, who happened to be present—

"Here is a proposal, Harriet, that I scarcely know how to answer. My brother is coming to Sydney immediately to place his son at school with Bury, but he wishes him to attend only as day scholar, and proposes him living here, and wants to know if we shall have any objections to receive him."

"Oh! I don't think we can have any objections," replied Mrs Dare; "he can occupy the green-room, it is never used, and he will be no inconvenience."

"If his accommodation were the only point, it could be soon settled," said her husband, "but there are other things to be considered. Do you think that Albert will not suffer from a companion so wild and unsteady?"

"I should think not; Albert is a very good little boy,

he would not pick up any naughty tricks; besides, he is so much younger—Mark is fifteen."

"That is true," said Mr Dare, thoughtfully; "and for Christina we need not fear, his example could scarcely do a girl harm. I should be sorry to refuse my brother, we were great friends once; however I must think about it." Then turning to me he said, "You were asking me, Miss Norris, about Mark, whether he lives here or not, you will soon have an opportunity of judging of him for yourself."

Mr Dare was not a person who spoke much of his family plans, and whatever other conversations passed upon this subject he held privately with his wife. I heard no more of it until informed that the offer had been accepted, that Mark was to be received into the house as one of the family, and that he and Albert were to attend school together daily. This arrangement, I expected, would prove decidedly for Albert's advantage; it would do him good to be away from the petting of home, though only for a few hours every day, and forced to make his way among others boys, he would have the best chance of being cured of the selfishness and irritability of temper which were day by day increasing under the injudicious indulgence of his mother. But with the rest I could not be so well pleased; if Mr Mark Dare was in reality the young scape-grace he was represented, it was difficult to imagine his uncle would not have cause to repent of admitting him as the constant associate of his own children; for although he might say that, from the difference of age in one case, and sex in

the other, neither Albert nor Christina were likely to be much influenced by him, I had had too great experience of young people not to feel that such reasoning was false, and I knew how much an idle companion will unsettle the most steady. If, in encountering this risk, Mr Dare committed an error, it was one that arose from his very benevolence and kindness of heart; he was unwilling to lose an opportunity of benefiting his nephew and of obliging his brother. There was also another thing, which, although a worldly consideration, it would be impossible to blame him for regarding; his affairs were very much involved with those of his brother, and it was of importance to his interest that they should continue on good terms; and while it would be unjust to say that to this his decision was to be attributed, it no doubt had its weight.

CHAPTER V.

AN ADDITION TO THE FAMILY.

THE prospect of the variety which this addition to the family would occasion, afforded Christina much pleasure; she had never seen her cousin, but felt sure that, as he was only one year older, he must be a suitable companion for herself, and I fear that the fact of him being wild and fond of frolic, was far from a bad recommendation in her eyes. For my part, I am so partial to all young people that I would not prejudge him unfavourably, but hoped to find that his faults had been exaggerated, or were, as his uncle hinted, the result of mismanagement. In the course of the ensuing week the young gentleman and his father arrived. Mr Henry Dare bore a strong resemblance to his brother, with the difference that every peculiarity of the latter was in him much strengthened; the look of care in the countenance was, indeed, less, but the thoughtfulness amounted to sternness, while the keen eye and compressed mouth, which in the other were expressive of only the valuable qualities of firmness and decision, denoted here the most immovable determina-

tion; his manners and voice were alike indicative of the same character, and I observed that they did not soften even towards his son. As far as external appearance was concerned, Mark Dare was undoubtedly a fine boy; tall and dark, with a bold independent air; in this respect he might be only what his father had been at a similar age, but very different from what I can imagine Mr Henry Dare to have been, in the open brow and bright sweet smile, which threw animation and intelligence into every feature. And yet it was evident that all was not right, for pleasing as the face by nature was, it at times clouded in a very remarkable and unpleasant manner, and, sad to say, it mostly did so when addressed by his father; it required small penetration to see that the footing they were on together was anything but such as should subsist between a widowed parent and his only son.

Mr Henry Dare had intended to remain some time with his brother, but business calling him back to his station, he was obliged to leave with the rest of a single day. During this short interval I had little opportunity to make acquaintance with Mark until the afternoon on which his father was to take his departure, when he came into the school-room, just as Christina was finishing her lessons, and observing that his aunt had told him we walked out every evening, announced his intention of accompanying us. Christina expressed her satisfaction, and we accordingly put away our books at once.

Like his cousin, Mark had a great deal to say, and like her no shyness to get over towards strangers. He was

lively and observant, and described to us his bush life in a very amusing manner. This, from its novelty, was interesting to me, though he seemed to have particular pleasure in dwelling on hairbreadth escapes he had seen in the stock-yard from cattle, and on encounters with the blacks. Some of his stories I thought, could I have believed them not exaggerated, very terrible; but Christina only laughed at what frightened me. His journey—that is, the land portion—had been made on horseback, occupying four days; and, turning to his cousin, he observed—

"The Lyalls travelled with us part of the way. Do you know them?"

"Yes; mamma always calls upon them when they are in Sydney."

"We fell in with them," continued Mark, "at Cedar Creek. We found them there in such a fix! The creek was swollen by heavy rain, and they could not get across, and there they had been for the best part of a week, camped on the banks, with only a tarpaulin to cover them; not that the water was very deep either, but the banks were very steep and slippery, and they wanted more hands."

"And what did they do, at last?" we inquired.

"Oh, why, Lyall had ridden on to get assistance from a bullock dray that was camped down the creek; but before he came back we contrived to get the cart up. My father went to the horses' heads, and Jack and I pushed; then they were all right."

"Your arrival was very opportune," I remarked. "Mr

John Lyall must have been obliged for your assistance."

"Mr John Lyall!" repeated Mark, looking at me.

"I thought you spoke of a son of Mr Lyall's; or is he a servant, whom you designate as Jack?"

Mark seemed amazingly entertained by both of these suppositions, and while he had his laugh out we were left in ignorance of what it was that amused him.

"I twig your mistake now," said he; "but Jack is a young lady, so called because she is so flash; Jack being a more appropriate name than Emily."

"Pray, Mr Mark," said I, "are the very elegant expressions you used in that sentence bush phraseology? But I suppose, since Miss Lyall is that description of young lady, she did not mind the disagreeableness of camping out?"

"Not she; she thought it all fine fun. While the rest were complaining of being so detained, she found amusement for herself in first catching and killing a large snake, and then skinning him."

The exclamation of horror which escaped me rather displeased Mark, and he observed—

"That sort of thing may not come quite up to your fine English ideas of what is ladylike and refined, Miss Norris; but I can assure you that Jack Lyall, little as you might think of her, with her sunburnt face and rough ways, is a very good-hearted girl, and deserves, I think, great credit for making herself happy on such an uncomfortable, ill-managed station as theirs is."

"Very far be it from my wish," I replied, "to under-

value the good qualities of any one; but is it not a pity that a girl who seems to have some merit should do herself an injustice by adopting ungraceful peculiarities?"

"That is another question, Miss Norris," rejoined Mark, "and there may be differences of opinion as to what are ungraceful peculiarities. I like a girl to be independent."

"So do I," I replied; "but the independence I admire is that of being able to think and act for one's-self, and to dispense with the comforts of life when necessary; not that kind which sets at naught the received opinions of society."

This was probably too long a speech for my companions to attend to, and before it was well finished Christina cut it short, exclaiming—

"Ah! that is your way, Miss Norris. I agree with Mark. I despise people who are slaves to the rules of society."

Then, addressing her cousin, she continued—"Tell us, Mark, how does Miss Lyall amuse herself on the station?"

"Why, she takes a great interest in all that goes on at the station," replied he, "and makes herself very useful. She will catch her own horse in the paddock, and saddle him herself, and then fetch in the mob of horses. She can crack a stock-whip famously. Then she is very fond of turning, and will turn the handle of a spade or of a stock-whip for any person who wants one. I have got a very nice handle that she turned for me."

"Does she really do all that?" said Christina, who

was more interested in the account of Miss Lyall's manly amusements than she had shown herself in any other part of her cousin's conversation. "I think better of Emily Lyall than I ever did before. I shall try and cultivate her acquaintance while she is in Sydney."

I was sorry to hear Christina speak thus, the more as it was but too much in accordance with sentiments I had at other times heard her express; but this was not the time to enter upon an argument, and I therefore did not attempt to alter her views, but inquired whether Mr Lyall's station was near Mr Dare's.

"Oh, yes," replied Mark, "they are our nearest neighbours; only twenty miles off."

"And you call that near neighbourhood?"

"To be sure. We reckon people neighbours if they are fifty miles off; and I can tell you that unless they are nice people, twenty may be a good deal too near. Should you like to live in the bush, Christina?" he added, addressing his cousin.

"No," was the reply, very decidedly.

"I thought you would," said Mark. "Would you not like to hunt kangaroos and emus, and ride so much more than you do in Sydney?"

"Yes, I should like that, but one can't ride all day, and I am certain I should find it dull. Sydney is bad enough, but the bush would be worse."

We took a long walk this afternoon. At last, looking at his watch, Mark observed, "I think, Miss Norris, that, if you don't mind, we had better turn back now, for my aunt wishes me to be at home when my father goes."

"Certainly we will return," I said; "you would, I am sure, be sorry not to take leave of your father."

"Oh, I should not care," answered Mark, indifferently, "only Mrs Dare requested me to be home in time."

"You are not thinking what you are saying, I am sure, Mr Mark; you are to be separated from your father probably for some years, and who knows whether you may ever see him again?"

Perhaps it was not my placé to reprove him thus, but it seemed to me so sad that the boy should not love his only remaining parent. Mark looked at me surprised.

"Why do you say so? Do you think my father looks ill?"

"No, I meant nothing of the kind; but we all know how precarious life is. Have you never heard of sudden deaths?"

"Oh yes, to be sure," answered Mark; "I have heard of people being drowned on the very voyage papa is going. Poor Mrs Lyall, the wife of the gentleman I was telling you about, had a brother lost two years ago; he had been paying them a visit, and returning to Sydney the steamer struck on a rock, and every soul on board perished. It was a very terrible affair."

Mark looked graver than usual for some minutes, and I hoped that a recollection of the dangers of the voyage on which his father was about to embark might have the effect of softening his feelings towards him. And it did so, for though during the remainder of our walk he spoke carelessly on different subjects, on reaching home, and finding the carriage waiting at the door, he exclaimed, as

he ran up the steps, "Oh, papa is not gone; I am glad of it."

In the hall we met Mr Henry Dare, who took leave of us. Having kissed Christina, and shaken hands with me, he turned to his son.

"Good-bye, Mark," said he, "I hope you intend to behave well; for mind, I shall hear of your proceedings both from your uncle and from Mr Berry, and my favour will entirely depend on your own conduct."

Mark returned no answer. As might be supposed, such an address repelled the better feelings which had been just awakened in his mind. Mr Dare added not one kind word, but turned away, and I thought that as he did so he sighed. Perhaps he had a presentiment that grief was in store for him through his son, and to look at the dark unpromising countenance of the boy, it would be impossible to say that such a fear was unfounded. Yet however much inclined I might be to sympathise in a parent's feelings I could scarcely pity Mr Dare, so much greater was the blame to be attached to himself. He was a person very difficult to understand, for two reasons: first, he was a character considerably differing from the usual specimens of mankind, one which is fortunately rarely met with; and secondly, his impenetrable reserve rendered it almost impossible to discover his true character. It was not until long afterwards that I could say I was really acquainted with him, any more than for some time I fully understood his son; the latter possessing so many qualities, good, and even noble, but, at the same time, shades which threatened to obscure the bright-

est portions of his disposition. Mr Henry Dare was very obstinate in all his opinions, and it appeared to me that a mistaken theory of education which he had adopted, and consequently held fast, had been the origin of much that was amiss in Mark. Of the natural gifts and capabilities of those born in this colony he entertained a high opinion, and consistently advanced that a colonist, who had any justice done to his talents, would, on an average, surpass English youths of the same age. His own son was to be an example of the correctness of this theory, and as Mark early gave evidence of quickness and ability, he found it not difficult to persuade himself that he really was to be something very remarkable. Too soon, however, there appeared various faults and follies which, although childish and trivial in themselves, proved to the father that his son, however well endowed by nature, was no prodigy, and, angry and disappointed, he resented these with a severity which tended to increase rather than check them; and as Mark grew older, and displayed a love of amusement dreadfully opposed to study, a want of application of which not even his natural quickness stood him in place, and a decided distaste for literature, Mr Dare at last lost all patience, and, in the bitterness of his mortification, prophesied that Mark would never know anything, and grow up, instead of the ornament, the disgrace of his family. The expression was frequently made use of, both in speaking to the tutor and to the boy himself, and unfortunately Mark's faults were of a kind to become more stubborn under harsh treatment. He doubted his father's regard, and repaid his severity with

sullenness and indifference. The two evils acted upon one another; Mr Dare was daily irritated by increasing failures of duty in his son, and exasperated to show him less and less forbearance, until by the time Mark was fifteen, he seemed really on the high road to fulfil his father's prediction.

When placed in his uncle's family he was extremely backward in his education, for though he had picked up for himself a great deal of information respecting everything that came within his sphere of observation, he was lamentably deficient in the knowledge that books convey, and it was evident that his tutor, weary of instructing a boy who did him so little credit, had likewise grown careless. He had now, however, the best chance of recovering lost ground, as his was precisely a nature to be stimulated by competition. He soon became a general favourite in the house, and with Christina, in particular, struck up a lively friendship. In their hours of leisure they were inseparable, and for myself, though I could often have dispensed with his company in the school-room, I was sensible of the charm of his good temper and vivacity.

Mr Dare having heard so much against his nephew was inclined to regard him suspiciously, and on the second day said to his wife, "How has that young fellow been conducting himself? Not giving much trouble, I hope?"

"Oh no," replied Mrs Dare; "he is quite an acquisition. I don't know when we have had anybody in the house I like so well."

A good word was spoken for him by every member of the family, and this insensibly had its weight with my cousin; so the young gentleman was established in favour with the household.

He appeared to be quite happy and delighted with his new abode. A town life, after the seclusion of the bush, was of course agreeable; and being lavishly supplied with pocket-money, he was at no loss for the means of indulging his fancies; for it was one of Mr Henry Dare's notions that the best way of preventing a young person being in after-life either extravagant or avaricious is to accustom him early to the use of money; and thus his son, who on most other points was injudiciously restrained, was intrusted with far too large an allowance.

Mark very soon fell into the regular routine of the house. He and Albert went to school after breakfast, and were expected to return together as soon as school was over. Christina pursued her usual lessons with me during the morning, but it was vain to hope to have anything done after four o'clock—that being the hour Mark usually came home; and whether he interrupted us with perpetual inquiries of when she would be at liberty, or was at noisy play with Albert, it was equally impossible to fix her attention; so I was contented to let his appearance be the signal for putting away the books. We then, with the exception of Albert, who was generally his mamma's companion in her drives, went out to walk together, returning to tea about seven; and thus, not unpleasantly, passed away some weeks.

CHAPTER VI.

MY TROUBLES COMMENCE.

BUT Mark's restless disposition had not been exaggerated, and it soon began to show itself in the commission of various pranks. The first he ventured on in his uncle's house were such boyish follies as erecting a ghost to frighten the maid-servants, and placing the skin of a snake in my shoe —I having expressed a peculiar dread of those reptiles. Mark laughed heartily at the terror it caused me, and said he had had no hope of his joke being so successful. Mr Dare, however, whom Christina at breakfast informed of the alarm I had received, took it rather seriously, was a good deal displeased, and told his nephew that practical jokes were both cruel and ungentlemanly. But this admonition had little effect, and scarcely a day passed without some performance of the kind, which, though denominated fun, had always a mischievous object.

This soon began to unsettle Christina, it was too much in accordance with her own taste; and in all her cousin's frolics she assisted, or was a confidant. She no longer

spoke or seemed to care about improving herself, but was occupied solely with their daily amusement. In most of what they did there was no actual harm, further than that it was unbefitting a young lady and gentleman, and if known, would be displeasing to Mr and Mrs Dare. But not one of the least evils attending Miss Christina's careless education was the habit she had acquired of, without practising absolute deceit, concealing what passed from her parents. Accustomed at no time to converse freely with either of them, this was no difficult task. While with regard to Mark, it was with grief I discovered that he did not hesitate, when it suited his purpose, to give things a very false colouring, I was, however, thankful to perceive that I had considerable influence over both, and this I trusted, with God's blessing, to turn to good account. Their regard, indeed, did not prevent Mark frequently teasing, and Christina laughing at me; but when not in pursuit of some folly, they were by no means deaf to reason; and perhaps the fact of their having been hitherto rarely treated as rational and reflective creatures made them attach the greater weight to such arguments as I was capable of using.

About this time I had the pleasure of paying a visit to Mrs Hill. Christina had gone with her father and cousin for a ride, and Mrs Dare invited me to accompany her to the North Shore, offering to leave me at the parsonage while she made a call at a house some miles distant. I was then introduced to Mr Hill, he and his wife only being at home. He was quite my idea of what a parish priest should be, and appeared in every respect worthy

to be the husband of so excellent a person as my friend. They both, though without in the least seeming to investigate officiously the private arrangements of Mr Dare's household, asked many questions as to whether I was comfortable in my situation, and expressed a kind interest in the young members of the family, especially in Mark, with whose father Mr Hill had been once well acquainted.

Mrs Dare left me to enjoy their society for more than an hour, and when we reached home my pupils, I found, had returned from their ride. As we drove up, I observed Mark lounging near the house in company with a young man, whom I concluded to be a school-fellow, though he looked a good deal older, and in appearance was singularly unprepossessing.

During tea, Christina mentioned that she had seen them from the garden, and inquired the name of the stranger youth.

"That was Philipson," replied Mark, "I have told you about him; he asked me to go to his house some day, and then I shall see his sisters. I daresay you would like to know them, would you not?"

"Yes, very much. I wish I knew some young ladies; but mamma is not acquainted with Mrs Philipson."

"No, but we will see about it; perhaps we may manage some way."

I recollected to have heard Mark frequently mention a person of the name of Philipson generally as a precedent for something wrong or mischievous, and I said, "Who is your friend, Mr Mark? You have entertained

your cousin with him a great deal of late, but from your stories he does not seem a very creditable acquaintance."

Mark coloured slightly, then said boldly, "He is a school-fellow of mine; all my stories are about my school-fellows," and abruptly changed the subject.

I was satisfied, for I had heard from Mr Dare that Mr Berry was very particular about the respectability of the young gentlemen he received, and this conversation passed from my mind, until the recollection was painfully renewed.

In the course of one of our walks Mr Hill joined us, and entering into conversation with me, it was some time before I observed that Mark had separated himself from our party, and asking Miss Dare what had become of him, she pointed him out at a little distance speaking to a companion. They were not near enough for me, who am rather short-sighted, to recognise the stranger, but Christina knew him to be Mr Philipson, and having said so, she fell behind with Albert.

"By the by," said Mr Hill, "this introduces a subject on which I wish to say a word, Miss Norris; I think I may trust that you will not suspect me of a love of interfering, if I ask whether Mr Dare sanctions that intimacy of Mark's with young Philipson?"

"I cannot tell," I replied; "but I do not think the intimacy is greater than has arisen from circumstances."

"Of that I cannot judge," said Mr Hill; "but I see them very frequently together, and at times when I strongly suspect Mark is supposed to be at school."

"Indeed! I am sorry to hear that. No doubt Mr Philipson induces Mark to play truant?"

"Very probably, and I happen to know that Philipson is not a proper companion for Mark Dare; he has many bad habits. I have often seen him intoxicated, and even in a morning."

"How shocking, in one so young," said I. "It is a sad thing they should be companions; but it is so difficult to separate school-fellows."

"You do not suppose that Philipson and Mark are school-fellows?"

"I believe they are," I answered, simply. "Mr Philipson is one of Mr Berry's pupils."

"Where did you hear that?" asked Mr Hill, laughing slightly. "Philipson is one of the midshipmen of the *Sea Serpent*."

"Oh! your are mistaken, Mr Hill," I exclaimed.

"Excuse me," was his reply, "I think you will find that you are mistaken; but it is very easy to ascertain, for here comes Mark himself."

Mark, having parted with his friend, now rejoined us, and Mr Hill was about to address him, but I impatiently said, "That was one of your school-fellows you were speaking with, Mr Mark, was it not?"

Mark looked slightly embarrassed, but replied, glancing at Mr Hill, "Yes."

"And his name," said Mr Hill, "is Philipson?"

"Have you any objection to his name being Philipson?" was Mark's rude answer.

"Not the smallest," replied Mr Hill, dryly; "only it

is a very extraordinary thing, that if he is at school with you, he should also be an officer on board the *Sea Serpent*."

Mark's countenance underwent a change, his complexion seemed to become many shades darker, and in his gruffest tone he said, "I don't see that it signifies to you, sir, what he is, or what right you have to cross-question me about my companions."

"Oh! Mark, my dear Mr Mark! but there is surely some mistake. There must be two brothers very like each other, and Mr Hill has taken the one for the other."

"I am perfectly aware of what Mrs Philipson's family consists," replied Mr Hill, fixing for an instant a very penetrating gaze on Mark; "but we had better drop the subject."

The tone implied so evident a doubt of learning the truth by further questions, that Mark's worst feelings of anger were roused, and, without another word, he turned on his heel and walked away, muttering expressions so insolent that I was glad to wish Mr Hill an abrupt good evening, and terminate the interview.

We proceeded homewards—I being too much distressed to offer any remark, and Mark walking beside me in sullen silence. He was the first to speak, exclaiming, after a prolonged pause, "Confound old Hill!"

"Mr Mark," I said, "I must beg you to speak more respectfully of Mr Hill."

On this he turned upon me, "Oh! perhaps you think I ought to thank you for this; you may be sure I sha'n't forget it."

"Nay, Mr Mark, I do not deserve your blame; it was in your defence I said that Mr Philipson was your school-fellow; though had I been aware that you told me what was false, I should not have done so."

"False," retorted Mark, contemptuously, "the greater fool you for believing me; but you are so green—you are so easily humbugged!"

"Do you mean," I said, in surprise, "that you were not in earnest when you told me the other day that he was at school with you?"

"To be sure not. I only said it for fun, to see if you would be gulled."

The point of the joke, I confess, escaped me; but I answered, "Then, Mr Mark, I am exceedingly sorry that I said what must have given such an unfavourable and unjust impression of your character to Mr Hill, but I shall take the first opportunity of clearing you to him."

"No, no, for Heaven's sake, let the matter drop; don't renew it to him."

He seemed resolved to hear nothing more about it himself, for he began to whistle, and walked on a few steps in advance; at last, waiting for us to come up to him, he put some common-place question to me with his usual voice and manner.

However easy he might find it to throw off unpleasant thoughts, I could not do so as readily, and I am conscious that I answered abstractedly. He whistled louder than before for a minute, and then again addressed me.

"What the deuce are you thinking about, Miss

Norris?" said he, petulantly; finding his attempts to introduce a light conversation baffled.

"I am thinking, Mr Mark," I replied, "that having been the means of casting an unjust aspersion on your character, I cannot rest until it is removed. I hope you will allow me to explain to Mr Hill."

"Pooh! let my character take care of itself."

"But, consider, Mr Mark, it must have appeared to Mr Hill such a determined falsehood, a downright lie, and a lie is such a terrible thing, and unworthy of you; but I hope that you will be more careful of your jests in future, as you find how simple I am."

Whether it was my simplicity that moved Mark, or a sudden spark of grace in his heart, I cannot tell, but he made no observation for some minutes, while the working of his features told of the conflict within; then, with an effort, which evidently cost him much, he said, "What would you say if I told you that after all it was a lie, and that it was another when I said it was not?"

My first impulse was to exclaim, "Oh! I trust not;" but looking at him, I perceived every feature expressive of such deep shame, that I determined not to discourage him in his first step towards amendment by giving utterance to the full extent of my horror, and I replied, "I would say, that sad as it is to be so familiar with falsehood, there must be hope for a person who has sensibility to feel his errors, and candour to own them."

"Familiar with falsehood!" repeated Mark; "I have been more familiar with it than with truth, though, had

I always lived with people like you, I might have been different from what I am."

His tone was so sad, that, great as had been his fault, I felt there was an earnest of better things, and could not believe he was destined to be eventually a castaway. He made no further allusion to what had passed, until happening to look behind he saw Mr Hill advancing in our direction.

"Here is Mr Hill again," he said; "let us strike off into that road. There is no need to meet him."

"If you please," I replied; "though how much better it would be, instead of avoiding him, to"—— I stopped, and hesitated, fearful of irritating him.

"Well?" said he.

"I shall make you angry, I am afraid, if I speak."

"No, you won't."

"Well, then, it appears to me that you owe some apology to Mr Hill for having spoken to him disrespectfully; and," I added, hastily, "if you could bring yourself to confess that you told him an untruth, believe me, he would think the better of you, and it would be a weight off your own mind."

"Indeed, I would see him hanged first!" exclaimed Mark; but his better spirit came to his aid, and, more gently, he added, "Mr Hill would be so stiff and disagreeable."

"That, I am very sure, he would not," I answered; "but there is no time to argue the point. You must decide at once; only, I think, you would be happier if you could do it."

Mr Hill had paused to speak to some person, so that Mark gained a moment for reflection.

"Very well," said he; "I will do it, to please you."

"Not to please me,—to do your duty," I replied. "Shall we go on in front while you speak to Mr Hill?"

"No, the disagreeable is in doing the thing; I don't care who hears me."

Mr Hill now came up, and, with a slight bow, was passing on, when Mark, stepping forward, said, "Sir, will you stop one minute?" and proceeded to make his apology, though colouring highly, in a most becoming manner.

So far from being ungracious, Mr Hill, with a benevolent smile, extended his hand, saying, "My young friend, where repentance so soon follows a fault, there is every hope of amendment;" adding a few words of affectionate advice, which, I could see, were not lost upon Mark, and they parted with mutual feelings of satisfaction, arising, in the one case, from the Christian charity which made him rejoice at every indication of good in a fellow-creature, and in the other from a sense of having fulfilled his duty.

The remainder of the walk was almost in silence, Mark being deep in reflection, which, together with the events of the day, might, I trusted, produce a beneficial and lasting effect on his character.

Very shortly after this, one Saturday afternoon, which was always a holiday at Mr Berry's school, Mark introduced into the school-room a large Newfoundland dog, whom he called upon us all to admire. Christina, who

loves great animals, jumped up to caress him, but I, rather frightened to make acquaintance until I knew something of his disposition, was content to admire him at a respectful distance, and when Mark insisted on my stroking him did so in fear and trembling.

"Ah, Miss Norris, you would like him better if you knew where he came from," said Mark, in an arch tone of irony.

"Where did you get him?" asked Christina.

"That is a secret," replied Mark.

"Oh, but you must tell me," said his cousin.

"Perhaps I may tell you, some day, but Miss Norris shall never know."

"I guess," said Christina.

"I daresay you do;" then speaking aside, "they would not have parted with him, only they have no room for such a great brute. I gave all that I had left of my pocket-money for him."

It did not particularly concern me where Mark got the dog, and I should not have given two thoughts to the matter had not he, in a laughing, teazing way, done his utmost to excite my curiosity, constantly saying, "Oh, Miss Norris, should not you like to know where I got Neptune?"

I promised to walk with them to the sea-side to see the dog swim, but in the evening we were prevented going out by the most terrific thunder-storm I had ever beheld. It came on very suddenly, accompanied by rain so violent, that in a quarter of an hour the avenue was a river, in which Albert might have sailed his boat. We

drew down all the blinds, but it was impossible to shut out the lightning; and Mark, seeing me rather frightened, took a malicious pleasure in relating stories of people being struck blind or dead, and telling me how frequent were such storms. On this I rallied my courage, and suggested, that, frightful as the lightning is in this colony, it must be of rather a harmless kind, as there were seldom in the newspapers accounts of damage done by it.

"Why, consider, Miss Norris," replied Mark, "how thinly populated many parts of this country are; but I assure you I have hardly ever seen a storm in the bush but damage is done by it either to sheep or trees."

Then perceiving that he had made me uncomfortably nervous, he did his best to neutralise the effect of such relations, and to laugh me out of my fears.

The rain continued, nearly without intermission, for several days, and during this space of time the young people were all exceedingly restless. Mark would not stay in the house for any one, and scorned his aunt's warning that by getting wet he would certainly be laid up with cold and rheumatism. Albert was the least dissatisfied of the party, for he could amuse himself with a story-book, though there threatened a revival of the old habit of squabbling between him and Christina. The latter I tried to interest in a pretty fancy work, which was fashionable in England; but she had not patience to learn it, and despised all employments most suited for a young lady. On the third or fourth day the clouds broke, and though the ground was of course in a most

unfit state for walking, Miss Dare insisted on at least a trial. I was, as usual, obliged to follow her lead, and Mark and his dog accompanied us.

It was less unpleasant than I anticipated, the roads having already begun to dry, so quickly does the sandy soil about Sydney absorb moisture, and the air had the balminess it generally wants. All vegetation wore a freshened aspect, and the hum of the locusts sounded almost musically among the trees of the domain.

We reached "Mrs M'Quarrie's chair," and, while I rested, Mark and his cousin went down to the rocks to bathe the dog.

They returned with a report that he swam famously, and having heated themselves running with him accepted likewise seats upon the stone. Suddenly, Neptune, who lay stretched at our feet, roused himself, seemingly attracted by some object in the distance, and the next instant he bounded forward to greet two young ladies, whom an abrupt turn in the road brought before us, jumping upon them with every demonstration of joy, and leaving indelible prints of his black paws on their white muslin dresses. Mark called him back, and very courteously expressed concern for the mischief he had done. The younger of the two girls, whose clothes had sustained greatest injury, took it very good-naturedly, saying, as she pushed the dog down, "Poor Neptune, dear old fellow!" but the elder sister raised her hand as if to strike him, exclaiming angrily, "A pretty figure poor Neptune has made of you, Annette!" and looked exceedingly cross, until Mark spoke to her, when she answered, with a set

smile, that it was of no consequence whatever. I also went forward with an apology, and we were all making civil speeches to each other, when a young gentleman in naval uniform joined the group.

"Halloa! Dare," he cried, "has Neptune been at mischief?" and receiving a slight reply from Mark, he introduced him to his sisters, Miss Philipson and Miss Annette Philipson. Mark, in turn, made the whole party known to his cousin and myself, and in the course of a very few minutes we were proceeding homewards together, Mark, his friend, and the youngest Miss Philipson in advance, and Christina, Miss Philipson, and myself bringing up the rear. The whole thing came so naturally, that it did not occur to me we were doing anything amiss, nor was it until we had walked a considerable distance, and I found myself somewhat thrown out in the very animated conversation that was passing between Misses Dare and Philipson, that I had opportunity to reflect what would probably be said by Mr Dare when he should hear my account of our introduction to these strangers. The girls were certainly pretty and well bred, and their brother's off-hand sailor-like manner I should not have thought otherwise than gentlemanly, had I not been prepossessed against them all. As it was, it was no small relief to me to separate at the foot of Wooloomooloo hill; and I could only hope that this first meeting would not involve further acquaintance, though I was apprehensive that it would lead to something more when I perceived on how easy a footing they were already, and that they all shook hands at parting.

That evening I took occasion to mention the occurrence to Mr Dare; he passed it over very slightly. "Quite right," he said; "you could not do less than apologise for an accident caused by your dog; I wish my children to be at all times polite and kind;" and he scarcely lifted his eyes from the book he was reading.

In the natural course of things this chance introduction would not have led to anything, and but for the folly and self-will of Mark and Christina the acquaintance would probably have ended where it began. But, unfortunately, they had been much caught with the lively manners and animated conversation of the young strangers, and I could see that they both, especially Christina, longed for occasions of further meeting. Only too soon was presented opportunity to effect their wishes. We encountered again upon the sea-beach, at the interval of a couple of days, when a frolicking search for oysters—for which the rocks about Sydney are famous—established as much familiarity among the young people as though they had been acquainted for months, and after this it fell out that our meetings were almost daily.

The domain had always been our walk, it seemed to be theirs also, so that the encounters had all the appearance of being by chance. I could not, however, help suspecting that appointments after the first once or twice were made, and the intimacy became far greater than was desirable, considering that the heads of both families were entire strangers to each other.

With the character of the young people I continued unacquainted, as they rarely cared to companionise with me, but I distrusted them. The slang and profane expressions used by the young man quite warranted the opinion I had originally conceived of him. And in the specimens Christina repeated to me of the girls' conversation, there was never anything the least good or improving.

Occasionally one or other of the young ladies would walk with me for a short distance, and on these opportunities I closely observed them. In Annette, the youngest, I am bound to say that I detected nothing whereof really to disapprove; she was, nevertheless, so commonplace, not to say silly, that I felt often at a loss to comprehend what could be her attraction to Miss Dare. Her mind also appeared totally uncultivated, and this argued ill for her mother; for though Mrs Philipson was assuredly not answerable for her daughter's ability, she might have taken pains with her education. Miss Philipson was very different; she could not be condemned as either silly or thoughtless, but from what I saw I liked her even less than her sister. She struck me as being very artful, and as having some object in view in the investigating questions she asked me respecting Mr Dare's family. She took pains to impress upon me, that although they were themselves at present living in a small way, they had been accustomed to great affluence, speaking in general terms of loss of fortune owing to bank failures, and hinting that the dislike her mother could never get over of going about in

a hired carriage, was chiefly the reason why they were not met at the houses of Mrs Dare's acquaintances.

"Indeed," said Miss Philipson, on one occasion, "there is very little inducement to go out much in Sydney; mamma has been always accustomed to move in a very select circle. At the house of the Honourable Mrs Torington, one of her most intimate friends, of course she met only the best society, and also when we visited my uncle, Sir Henry Aubery."

"But do you mean," said Christina, "that there is no good society in Sydney? I have heard people who ought to know say that there is some, though not much, very good society here."

"Oh! I did not by any means intend to say that," replied Miss Philipson; "only the Colonies are, of course, different from home. In Hobart Town we had many friends, who offered us letters of introduction to the first families here, but mamma does not care to make new acquaintances, she is very reserved, and the death of dear papa was a great blow, which she has never quite got over."

"How long is it since your father died?" asked Christina.

Now, this natural and simple question caused Miss Philipson to stammer in a very confused way; she named first one date, then another, and ended by hastily drawing Miss Dare's attention to some passing object, apparently as a means of changing the conversation. The next time we met, however, she recurred to the subject, and afforded us a full and circumstantial account of the last hours of Mr Philipson.

In the course of our discussion on society, a group of showily-dressed young women, whose features were of that Jewish cast with which we become so conversant in Sydney, passed us on the pavement, and smiled and nodded to Miss Philipson.

"You know those people?" observed Christina, as Miss Philipson returned the salutation by a somewhat condescending bow; "then you have some acquaintances in Sydney?"

"A few—not many."

"A few," repeated Miss Dare, "and those few Jews."

"They are not Jews," exclaimed Miss Philipson. "Why do you think they are?"

"From their having very decidedly the Jewish features," replied Christina, laughing, "to say nothing of their style of dress. I do not remember to have heard any Jews being met in society."

"They are not Jews, I tell you," reiterated Miss Philipson, almost angrily; "though," she added, recovering her usual gentleness of tone, "I should not perhaps vouch for all their ancestors; some generations back they may, possibly, have been connected with Jews."

"What is their name?" asked Christina.

"Braham," was the reply, after a slight hesitation.

"And are they nice girls?" pursued Christina.

"Very," replied Annette; "are they not, Jane?"

"Oh yes, very; though I don't care for them so much as I did, now that I have companions whom I like better," said Miss Philipson, in a fondling tone to Christina.

I now begin to feel the advantage I anticipated in writing these reminiscences. My ideas on my own conduct are cleared up, and I see, much more plainly than I did at the time, how culpably weak I was in permitting this intimacy to go on without informing Mr Dare. Frequently I resolved to do so, but Mark and Christina invariably, when I mentioned my intention, (for I did not chose to complain without warning them,) overpowered me with reasons why I should, at least, postpone my complaints.

"Papa did not forbid us to speak to the Philipsons, Miss Norris, quite the contrary. When you told him of our first meeting, he said it was all right; he wished us to do at all times what is kind and polite; and having met them once, he knows that we cannot cut them for the future."

It was true that Mr Dare had so spoken. Yet I was perfectly aware that the acquaintance was very different from what he supposed. If I hesitated they would continue—

"Papa is harassed with business all day, Miss Norris, and mamma is in very delicate health. I am sure it would be very inconsiderate to worry them with complaints about us."

Such weak and sophistical arguments could not convince me, nor would they, I hope, have deterred me from doing my duty; but they reminded me that Mr Dare had almost requested not to be troubled with my difficulties in the management of the young people, and I knew by experience how useless would prove any

application to his wife. They appealed also to my good nature, entreating me not to carry tales against them, until between what appeared contending duties, I became bewildered, and the result was that I kept silence.

CHAPTER VII.

WHAT I SAW THROUGH A HALF-OPEN DOOR.

SINCERELY attached as I was to my pupils, their unvarying spirits, even when not a source of anxiety, fatigued me, and I felt positive relief in the prospect of a quiet day I was to spend at Mr Hill's. Now, also, that my time was so much at the disposal of others, I appreciated the enjoyment of a few hours to myself. It happened to be a holiday at Mark's school, and he offered to accompany me down to the punt. As I waited in the school-room for him to join me, Christina observed, "What a blessing you must feel it to get rid of us for a whole day, Miss Norris."

"You cannot think that, my dear Miss Dare," I replied; "not but what I am pleased to spend the day with Mrs Hill, and were I only sure that you would not do anything foolish in my absence I should quite enjoy it."

"What! do you think I am such a baby as not to be trusted? Besides, what could I do? I have nothing in my power."

"Ah, my dear Miss Dare, the goodness that is dependent on the absence of temptation is not of much value,

and if that is your only security I cannot go with an easy heart."

Christina had the sort of temper that never takes offence, and she replied, good-humouredly, "But you need not fidget yourself, really, for I intend to work a long while at this drawing, and after dinner we are going to drive with mamma to a nursery garden to buy some plants."

I was well pleased to hear that the afternoon was to be thus disposed of, and I expected to be back myself by five or six o'clock, for Mrs Hill had some business in Sydney, and had promised to bring me home. Mr Hill's house was situated at a little distance from the water's edge, and the ascent to it was by a narrow path cut in the rock, bordered by flowering shrubs, from which the perfume of the wild orange deliciously exhaled. It was but a cottage, and not larger than was necessary for convenience, though pretty and picturesque, surrounded by a garden, and sheltered from the sun by a veranda, covered with twining roses and grenadilla, the former of which was at this season one mass of pink blossoms, and the latter weighed down with the load of fruit. Nor was the scene within less attractive; the shady room, with its green chintz furniture, had an air at once of elegance and simplicity, while the variety of books scattered about, the piano, and portfolios of drawings, testified to both the intellectual pursuits and accomplishments cultivated within its walls.

In the early part of the day, Mrs Hill was occupied with some household duties, so, after a little pleasant

conversation, she said she would leave me for a short time with her daughters; and Louisa accordingly, as soon as her mother left the room, brought her work and sat down with me. This was the first opportunity I had had of a chat with Louisa since our landing. She was very glad, I found, to be again in Australia, though, and she was the only colonist I had met with so liberal-minded, in her preference for this country, she did not exalt it over England. Of all the advantages Europe offers she was fully sensible, and she assured me that thinking of all that is to be there seen, and heard, and learned, she sometimes became quite discontented, and envious of English girls. In this remark, I knew Louisa was not in earnest; nevertheless, knowing how many privileges she enjoyed, I could not refrain from saying, "I am sure, Miss Hill, yours is not a disposition to be really discontented under any circumstances, and, with such a home, you have little reason to envy any one."

A shade of thought came over Louisa's bright face as she replied, "If you speak seriously I envy no one, Miss Norris. I would not change my home for any; but you know what I mean,—there is so much in England from which we poor colonists are cut off."

"You think that a short visit to England only excites longings to see more; do you then regret having been?"

"On the contrary, it is a pleasure to have been there; and really we have great reason to be thankful we went, for dear Fanny, who, when we left this colony, was so weak that she had to be carried on board, recovered her health, and now she is nearly well. Do you not think

she looks quite strong?" she added, as her sister at the moment entered.

The room was small, and Fanny was beside us in a moment, so I was spared replying, for strong I could not have said she looked. I might perhaps have ventured on the word healthy, though she struck me as looking extremely fragile. While she spoke to me, Louisa kept her eyes fixed upon her with an expression of affectionate interest, and I observed, "Miss Hill was telling me, Miss Fanny, how delicate you were when you went to England; I am so glad to see you so much better now."

"Oh, I am quite well now," was the reply, in a cheerful tone; "or if there is a little the matter with me, it is not more than gives me the privilege of being petted, and that is so pleasant that I do not think I shall ever get quite well, in order to retain it."

Miss Hill checked a sigh, and her sister, looking at her, smiling, said, "You know you think a great deal too much of my illness, Louisa; do not you think she does, Miss Norris? I have seldom any pain now, and I am not prevented doing what I like, except such things as dancing and taking long walks, and while so many pleasures are within my reach, would I not be very sinful were I discontented?"

I was struck with the earnest yet simple manner in which this was said. The capability of so viewing an affliction which, by one so young and naturally gay, could not but be severely felt, evinced surely a mind which, in strength of religious principle, was far above the common.

"But I do not like to talk about myself," she resumed;

"tell us, Miss Norris, have you heard from your brother lately, and does he like Wollongong?"

I told them that I had received satisfactory accounts that very morning, and he was well pleased with his new residence.

"I am glad to hear that," said Miss Hill; "and I hope that as he likes it he will remain there, and not come back to Sydney for a long while."

I laughed. "What has my poor brother done, Miss Louisa, that you wish him to stay away?"

"Nothing, except that, I suppose, he will take you away when he next comes to Sydney."

"That will depend upon circumstances," I replied. "I should be very sorry to leave Miss Dare at present."

"What a nice girl Miss Dare seems!" observed Louisa. "She has never taken exactly to us; but I think if I knew her better I should love her."

I did not encourage the Miss Hills to discuss Christina, although they were greatly inclined to do so. I have always made it a rule, when in a situation, not to speak much of my pupils to strangers, feeling that if I told only what was good it gave a false impression, or seemed like flattery, and it was still more unjust to expose defects which I had greater opportunity than almost any person else to discover.

The more I saw of this family the more I saw in it to admire; everything went on so smoothly, and every person seemed in their proper place. With all the frankness that should subsist between children and their parents, the young people had that respect for their father and

mother that the slightest expression of their wishes was attended to; and though there was nothing to repress innocent gaiety of spirits, there was that regularity in all the arrangements which would have rendered the commission of any of those extravagances I had lately witnessed quite impossible. Situated as I was, it was very difficult to refrain from drawing comparisons, disadvantageous as they were, in many respects, to my cousin Dare's family. Louisa struck me as being much what Christina might have been under different circumstances. She had a disposition which, as far as one can judge, had been formed by nature on a very similar mould, but improved by a judicious early education, and, regulated by principle, had become all that is excellent, a source of happiness to herself, and of comfort to her friends. Frank Hill was the same age as Albert, but so much more manly and advanced that he was quite a companion to his sisters, between whom and himself the warmest affection subsisted. Seeing all this, I again regretted that the Miss Hills were not the companions of my pupil, and it happened that while I was indulging the thought, Mr Hill expressed a wish that Miss Dare and her cousin had accompanied me.

"I feel an interest in Mark," said he, "for I am sure he has great capabilities of good. An ordinary boy would never have made that confession."

"I should be glad for my girls to have Miss Dare as a companion," added Mrs Hill; "and if ever you hear her express a wish to know them better, pray give her an invitation from me."

I readily promised, though I had doubts whether Christina was not now too much attached to the Philipsons to take pleasure in the quiet amusements of the Hills.

We dined early, and soon afterwards the carriage came round to take Mrs Hill and myself into Sydney.

The purport of her going there this day was to call at different houses to endeavour to collect subscriptions for the relief of some poor families who had suffered loss by a terrible fire in the neighbourhood. With all the ladies in her list she was not personally acquainted, and, disliking the task of soliciting strangers, she asked me to accompany her in her round. I had seldom visited Mrs Dare's friends, but as there would be no occasion for me to be otherwise than neutral, I started no objection. We went to several houses, at most of which Mrs Hill was a successful pleader. She stated the case simply and plainly, pointed out the real distress forcibly, yet without any attempt to work upon the feelings by highly-coloured pictures, so that people felt they knew for what they were called upon to give their money. After going to two or three houses at Wooloomooloo, Mrs Hill, looking at her list, observed, "The next house I have to go to is Mrs Philipson's."

Of this I was not sorry, being curious to see the mother of the young people with whom I had so unwillingly made acquaintance. The cottage, standing at the end of a short avenue or sweep, was not visible from the road. In front was a lawn which sloped down close to the Bay, and commanded a view of nearly the

whole harbour. The garden was in very trim order, and the door was answered by a neat servant-maid, who told us Mrs Philipson was at home; requesting us to step in, she left us for a moment in the hall, while she went to inform her mistress. There were evidently guests in the house, and the clatter of knives and plates, with a confusion of voices, reaching us from an adjoining room, Mrs Hill whispered that she feared we had come at an untimely hour, for the family were at luncheon or dinner. I made no reply; for, through the partly open door of the dining-room, I caught a glimpse of a scene which absolutely took away my power of speech. Round a long table, spread as if for luncheon, were seated a large party of young people, among whom, beyond mistake, were my two pupils, and all of them going on in a manner not only the most free, but the most ill-bred. I saw Mark Dare snatch a banana from the plate of Miss Jane Philipson, for which she boxed his ears, whereat the whole party laughed. Christina was in high spirits, her face was flushed and her voice very loud, as she called on Mr Philipson, addressing him simply by his surname, to reprove something that had been just said by a young lady seated next her, whom I at once recognised as one of the group whose Jewish extraction Miss Philipson had so positively denied. I had but a moment to take all this in, for a gentle, though decided, voice said, "Be quiet, Augustus; Jane, I will not have so much noise." The door closed, and the next instant a lady, who from her first tone we knew was the same we had heard speak, appeared.

She wore a black silk dress trimmed with crape, a widow's cap, and was exceedingly ladylike and pleasing in her deportment; receiving us with a graceful swimming courtesy, she led the way into the drawing-room.

"I have the pleasure of addressing Mrs Hill, I believe," was her first observation as soon as we were seated. "May I know to what I am indebted for the honour of this visit?"

"Mrs Philipson, I presume," said Mrs Hill. Mrs Philipson bowed. "I have," continued Mrs Hill, "undertaken to call on different families in this neighbourhood, to request some little assistance for the sufferers by the late fire. You are probably aware that the clergymen of the respective parishes have had a meeting and drawn up a subscription paper, and Mrs A., Mrs G., and myself have undertaken to go round to collect subscriptions."

"Of Mrs Hill's energy in the cause of charity I am not ignorant," said Mrs Philipson.

Mrs Hill, who did not care for compliments, merely replied, "Mrs A. and Mrs G. have been fully as active as myself, though this is a case which would stimulate any one."

"It has, indeed, been a most dire calamity," said Mrs Philipson. "Many sad stories of suffering have come to my knowledge, and doubtless there are others of which I have not heard."

"Many persons have been reduced to absolute destitution," replied Mrs Hill; and as she related one or two

cases of families losing their little all, Mrs Philipson listened with an expression of anxious interest.

"These are the cases," said she, "which make one regret a small income, but what little I can afford I give freely." She opened the subscription paper, ran her eye over the list of signatures, added her name, and without demur paid at once the small sum for which she had put down her name. Small it was certainly, but from her previous remarks we were bound to believe that it was, as she said herself, the widow's mite.

The business of the call being over, Mrs Hill rose, and apologising for having giving trouble, bowed, and departed.

In the passage we heard voices still in the dining-room, but much lower than before. As we got into the carriage, the whole party gathered to the window, and I again distinctly saw Miss Dare and her cousin. They were shrinking back, apparently fearful of being seen, but at the same time peering eagerly out to assure themselves, I suppose, of my identity. A most painful sensation came over me, as the idea presented itself that the visit had been prearranged, and the plan of going to the nursery garden an invention, intended to deceive me. I felt also deep shame in thinking of the impression they must have produced on Mrs Hill, and in the silence which ensued, I fancied it was delicacy made her refrain from remark, though I afterwards found they had escaped her observation.

"A pleasing-mannered person is Mrs Philipson," said I at last, feeling it necessary to make an effort to seem at

ease; and added mentally, "how very different from her children."

"Yes," replied Mrs Hill; "and yet I certainly should not have called upon her were it not that the omission would have been too pointed, as we had been at every other house at Wooloomooloo."

With this opening I ventured to ask whether there was anything against Mrs Philipson's family.

"I know nothing definite," replied Mrs Hill; "but there are rumours, there is a mystery about them; by their own account they are very well connected, and have always moved in very good society. They speak of having been intimate with many respectable families in Hobart Town, yet they have not brought to Sydney a single letter of introduction; this is, to say the least, odd, and joined to the wild character of the son, and bold, forward manners of the eldest daughter, give fair ground for supposing they are not nice people, although justice requires us to say, that Mrs Philipson's appearance and manner are only prepossessing, and she seemed interested in this charity."

Going from place to place much time was occupied, and when I at last took off my things in my own room, I found that Mark and Christina had returned, and were in the school-room. My resolution was by then taken, and I summoned all my energy to enable me to carry it out. I determined to speak first to themselves, to inform them of my intention, but to let no entreaties deter me from making an appeal to Mr Dare. I entered the school-room, the two aggressors were in low and very

earnest discourse together, and Albert was amusing himself with some pictures apart. I made an excuse for sending the latter out of the room for half-an-hour, then said, unceremoniously enough, I daresay, to the others, that I wished a little conversation with them, and must request their attention. At the moment I did not like the face of either, both looked inclined to be impertinent, though they made no objection, and I commenced by saying that I had been exceedingly astonished by my discovery. At the time I believed them quietly engaged at home, they were visiting, on the most familiar terms, at a house of which they had every reason to believe their parents and guardians disapproved. I said also, that I felt ill treated in my own person.

"I was grateful to you this morning for expressing pleasure that I was to have a day to myself; little did I know how you intended to behave in my absence."

"There you are out," exclaimed Christina; "we did not intend to go, it was mere accident; mamma sent us word about two o'clock that she was not going to drive, so we had nothing to do, and she asked us to take a basket of fruit to Mrs Wright's; her house, you know, is next the Philipsons', and just at the entrance of their own garden we met Mr Philipson, who invited us in; we could not resist the temptation, and went; so you see the case is very different from what you supposed."

"It is," I answered; "but not sufficiently different to alter my resolution of speaking to Mr Dare."

They glanced at each other, and the countenances of

both changed. Mark scowled, and Christina muttered, "How cross! how unkind!"

"I may appear so, Miss Dare, but in reality I am consulting only your interest, for no persons ever yet persevered in doing wrong without the consequence, sooner or later, coming on their own head. I shall speak to Mr Dare on the very first opportunity, tell him exactly how the intimacy stands, and it will then be in his power to stop it or not, as he thinks proper; for my own sake, as well as yours, it is necessary I do so. He believes that I regulate your conduct, whereas you know that you have completely withdrawn yourselves from my influence, and that I have not the smallest control over your actions."

"Very well, I see the consequences," said Christina; "and considering what a dull life I led before, I must say I think you very unkind. You not only stop the only amusement I have, but you take pleasure in being ill-natured."

This was said in mere temper, but though aware that it was so, I should have endeavoured to persuade her otherwise had not Mark resumed—

"But after all, I am not sure that I shall care so much if we have nothing more to do with them, for they have behaved very badly; those odious Brahams! I had no idea they knew such low people."

Perhaps I looked an inquiry, for Miss Dare said, addressing me—

"You did not understand the other day, from Jane Philipson, that those Brahams, who she and Annette

agreed were nice girls, are the very people who have a shop of that name?"

"Certainly not," I replied.

"They are though, their most intimate friends. I never met such a set of vulgarians."

"No; and there is a brother, too," said Mark, "a horrid snob. It is too bad of the Philipsons to know them."

'Seeing how angry they were, it for a moment passed through my mind to allow them one more trial, in the hope that they would of themselves give up the Philipsons; but the next instant I felt my own weakness; and Christina's remark, "I spoke to Jane, and told her that if they did not drop the Brahams, we would have nothing more to say to them," showed me that she had no intention of breaking off the acquaintance.

Mr and Mrs Dare were going out to dinner, and I decided to go at once to the drawing-room; as he would probably be dressed before his lady's toilette was completed, I should have an opportunity to see him in private. Albert's voice being now heard in the passage, I prepared to leave the room.

"There is one thing, Miss Norris, I hope you take into consideration," said Mark, in a cold, sullen tone, "you are aware that my uncle is very much harassed with business just now?"

"That is an argument to which I have given in too long, Mr Mark," I rejoined; "I see my duty now clearly, and I hope I shall have strength of mind to perform it."

"Strength of mind! much of that you have, sure

enough," I heard as I closed the door, and an insulting laugh followed.

This sarcasm, and the conviction that I had lost the love of my young relations, on which I had always relied, deprived me of the small portion of courage I had mustered with so much difficulty; and when I entered the drawing-room, and found Mr Dare standing by the fireplace, I was quite unfit for the interview. He addressed me with some commonplace remark, in a kind, familiar tone, which, contrasting with the harshness of his daughter and nephew, increased my agitation. I could not command my voice as usual, and tears, in spite of my efforts to restrain them, rushing to my eyes, Mr Dare said—

"My dear Miss Norris, what is the matter? Something has distressed you; nothing in my family, I hope? nothing of the young people?"

"It is, indeed, the young people who occasion my distress," said I; "and I wish, if you will grant me a few minutes, to speak to you of them."

"You surprise me, Miss Norris, but speak at once, and without hesitation."

Thus encouraged, I might have spoken freely, but I could not collect my thoughts; a dread, which arose from my weakness, that I was acting unkindly came upon me, and instead of entering at once on the subject of the Philipsons, I hesitated until Mr Dare said, impatiently—

"Is it of Christina?"

"She is very intractable," said I, "very self-willed."

"I know she is, but is she more so than formerly?"

"Since her cousin, Mark, came," I began; but he interrupted—

"Oh! I understand, when they get together they are more than you can manage; but, by Heaven, if Mark upsets the regularity of my family, he shall not remain a day longer here."

His face clouded as he spoke in a manner which is, I think, peculiar to the Dares, and I immediately pictured to myself Mark turned in disgrace from his uncle's house, and hurried thereby down that road to ruin from which my purpose was to endeavour to save him. Mr Dare had, I knew, a temper which, once roused, would stop at no half measures, and to avoid the risk of any such catastrophe as I dreaded, I caught myself, saying what I could in favour of Mark; nothing, I do believe, but what was true, only it did not exactly bear upon the case in point, and was certainly not what I had intended to say. In reply to this, Mr Dare asked, impatiently—

"Of what is it, then, you complain?"

I hesitated a moment, then spoke in a general way of self-will, inattention to study, disregard of my wishes, and I did not even mention the Philipsons.

Mr Dare listened with attention, and when I had concluded, and rose to retire, he said, "I will admonish them myself. If you are going up-stairs, be so good as send them to me; all of them—Albert also."

"Oh, of Albert," I said, "I have nothing to complain."

"Well, then, the two elder."

To deliver this message I looked into the school-room

on the way to my bed-room, merely saying, "Mr Mark, Miss Christina, Mr Dare is waiting you in the drawing-room."

One glance passed between them, and they obeyed the summons with something of the air of prisoners going to execution.

Mr Dare spoke to them very severely, and they both were rather frightened, for they stood considerably in awe of him; but it was solely for want of attention to study and deference to my wishes that he reproved them, and they were quick enough to draw the just conclusion, and to see that my complaints had had relation only to their general conduct, and by no means to the subject for which I had in fact sought the interview. The knowledge that I had made a threat, and not had courage to fulfil it, had of course bad consequences, by teaching them to despise my instability of character, and encouraging them in self-will.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW WE SPENT THE DAY OF THE REGATTA.

MY pupils were an exemplification of how in youth a strong perverse will that scorns control may lead its possessor into snares not very dissimilar to those into which the weak and irresolute are liable to fall. In the capability of self-government Christina and Mark had made no progress, and thus, while they gloried in fancied independence, they were in reality the sport of every temptation that came before them under a pleasing form. The only thing that could have compensated for their deficiency on this head was a wholesome fear of some authority they dared not slight, and well for them would it have been had they been under the care of one whose strength of purpose was equal to their own. The dread of my giving information to Mr Dare had hitherto acted as a sort of restraint, and this being now removed they were ready to brave my incompetent authority to the utmost. An occasion was not long of offering.

Mark was curious to see the regatta which was about to take place, and Mrs Philipson, it seems, had invited

him and Christina to spend that day at her house, from the garden of which they would have as good a view of the harbour as could be desired; Philipson, at the same time, offering Mark the additional inducement of going on the water in a boat. This invitation, however much they might like to have accepted it, seemed at the moment quite unavailable, Mr Dare having arranged to accompany them himself to Fort Macquarie. On the morning of the day, however, a letter arrived, which required him to go immediately a short distance into the country on business, and plans were thus disconcerted. He came into the school-room before starting, and said, good-naturedly, "I am sorry to be so suddenly called away; for you, Christina, must give up the regatta. However, you have seen several, so it will not be so much of a disappointment, and Mark, if he will promise not to go on the water, can go all the same." Mark gave the required promise, and Christina asked why she might not accompany him. To this proposal her father would not for a moment listen, saying, very properly, that it would never do for her to be seen in such a crowd without a proper protector, and Mark, though quite competent to take care of himself, was by no means a sufficient escort for his cousin.

"Last year Albert and I spent the day at Mrs Hawkins's," observed Christina, "and saw it from her veranda. How nice it would be if we had some friend's house to go to this time;" and she glanced significantly at Mark.

"I have met Philipson once or twice lately, by

chance," said Mark, addressing his uncle. "The veranda of his mother's house overlooks the harbour; I am sure his sisters would be very happy to see Christina."

"Christina," replied Mr Dare, "visits only at the houses of our friends; and Mrs Philipson is not even an acquaintance of your aunt's."

"But, uncle, I assure you ——" Mark began.

"Allow me, Mark, the liberty of choosing my daughter's companions," interposed Mr Dare, very decidedly; and the carriage being at this moment announced, he merely added, "Next year, I hope, Christina, we shall be more fortunate," and left the room. Christina stood looking rather blank.

"Well, my dear," said I, "I have something to do in my own room, but when you wish to walk I shall be ready to accompany you."

"I don't much care to do anything if I am not to see the regatta," said Christina, petulantly. "I am disappointed." I retired, and she and Mark were left alone together.

Half an hour afterwards Miss Dare came to my room and asked me to walk, and I, suspecting no mischief, at once consented.

In the veranda we found Albert trimming some of his mother's plants.

"Oh, you are going out," said he; "shall I go with you? Mamma can't drive to-day, as papa has the carriage away."

"Why, we are going a very long walk, and you will be sure to be tired, Ally," replied Mark.

"And it is a dreadfully hot day," added Christina; "you know you always complain that the heat gives you a headache."

This was perfectly correct; nevertheless, I was rather surprised by their unusual care for the little boy. Albert was easily put off, he was not accustomed to companionise with them, and he replied—

"Ah, it is hot; I daresay I should be tired; I won't go."

Mark and Miss Dare walked some paces away from me, deep in a discussion which had, apparently, great interest, as they scarcely addressed me once, until reaching the gate of Mrs Philipson's garden, they paused, and said, as if on the discovery of the moment—

"Here we are, close to the Philipsons', what do you say to paying them a visit? We could see the regatta well from their garden; should not you like to see it, Miss Norris?"

"Not on these terms," I replied; "and I earnestly trust that you do not contemplate such a thing. Oh! Christina, yield some obedience to your father, if you render none to any one else."

Mark had his hand on the gate to open it, but his cousin drew back.

"After all, Mark, I am not sure."

Words which betrayed to me that a plan had been concerted; so does one fault lead to another. In the former visit, which had given me so much vexation, they

had only yielded to temptation, they were now about to repeat it by an act of deliberate transgression.

"Please yourself," said Mark; "but I shall certainly go."

"But papa did not positively forbid you, and he did me."

"And you never did anything that he forbid, I suppose?"

"I can't say that, exactly; only to-day he spoke so very decidedly."

"Please yourself," replied her cousin; "only I think the Philipsons will be rather surprised that you are not with me; they think you have some spirit."

"So I have," said Christina, almost angrily; "but I don't know that I should show it by venturing to disobey my father."

"No, to be sure not," I exclaimed; "and I tell you once for all, that I will not pass through this gate."

This remark seemed to irritate Christina, for, detaining her cousin, she said—

"Stop one minute, Mark."

"What is the use of keeping me, if you are only going to argue," said he, impatiently.

"But I am not going to argue, I am coming with you," answered Christina, seeming to make up her mind with a sudden effort. "Miss Norris, if you don't choose to come with us you can go home;" and she pushed open the gate.

I was now in a great difficulty, and hesitated what for my own part to do. Expostulation was worse than vain,

and thinking that my duty was at all events not to lose sight of my pupil, I, though much against my will, followed them into Mrs Philipson's grounds.

The racing had begun some time before, and from the avenue we discerned a group of persons collected at the further end of the garden. A number of white dresses were gleaming in the sunshine, and Christina said—

"What ladies are those they have with them, I wonder? the Brahams, I 'll lay any wager."

"Oh, no," replied Mark; "they promised they would have nothing more to do with the Brahams."

"It is, though," said Christina, after a pause, during which her eyes were intently directed to that part of the garden. "I have a great mind to go back."

She half turned, but I, who, alas! never know at the right moment what should be done, exclaimed—

"Yes, do, my dear Miss Dare."

I might have known better, so many proofs had I had that advice only confirmed her in her own way; for, adding, fretfully, "No, I won't either," she, as much from opposition as anything else, proceeded.

We were received in the drawing-room by Mrs Philipson, who shook hands with Miss Dare quite affectionately, saying, "How happy my young people will be to see you; we had quite given you up." Then turning to me, "Miss Norris? I was not aware it was Miss Norris whom I had the pleasure of seeing with Mrs Hill."

Her manner was very polite, and yet there was in it something which made me feel she would have been better pleased had I not been there. Another lady was

present, who half rose from her seat, as if expecting to be introduced. Mrs Philipson did not introduce her, and she sat down again with an offended jerk. She was stout, and gorgeously dressed, wearing, although it was the heat of the summer, a velvet shawl, richly embroidered. Her appearance was altogether peculiar, and certainly anything but lady-like.

Mrs Philipson sent a message to her son and daughters, but before it could be delivered, the whole party entered the house. At once I recognised the Miss Brahams, daughters of the above-mentioned lady. That they were very intimate with the Philipsons was clear, for one had her arm round Annette, who shook her off unceremoniously on seeing Christina. They addressed Miss Dare familiarly, but she seemed determined to keep them at a distance. Their brother was with them, a young man about the age of Mr Philipson; vulgar in person, and rendered still more so by the quantity of mock jewellery with which he was adorned. His air was very pert as he advanced to shake hands with Mark, but Mark, too, could be cold and repulsive when he pleased, and not appearing to notice the intention, he put him off with a careless nod. Braham turned aside in a huff, and Mrs Philipson, whose manner was conciliating to everybody, told him, in a very low voice, not to be offended, but to make allowance for English manners.

"He is as much of a colonist as we are," was the muttered reply; "so that won't do."

Mark was impatient to see the boating, and deemed every moment spent in the house lost time. So express-

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ing a wish to that effect, he went into the garden, in company with the other two youths. Miss Philipson proposed to Christina to follow their example, saying, that the best race was about to start.

"Will you go with them, Miss Norris," said Mrs Philipson, "or are you, like Mrs Braham and myself, afraid of the sun? If you prefer remaining in the house, you will be able to see something of what goes on from these windows."

I thought I had better go with Christina, and as she had already left the room, I followed. At the bottom of the garden was a rocky point, from which we saw everything. Both land and water presented a very gay scene; crowds of people were collected, all enjoying the holiday; and the beautiful harbour, covered with innumerable boats, was a spectacle such as I could have enjoyed had I been witness to it under circumstances less annoying. Philipson and Mr Braham, indeed, contrived to render the occasion one of not such harmless amusement by laying wagers on the different boats, and soon they offered bets to Mark, who accepted them with readiness. I was distressed to perceive how completely he fell into their ways, using slang, and even oaths, in a way I had never before heard him. Christina was the centre of the other group, though towards the Miss Brahams she was for long very cold. They were, no doubt, vulgar girls, whom it was necessary to keep at a distance, and yet she displayed more haughtiness than, considering she had volunteered to join the party, was at all warrantable. Miss Philipson had

never appeared to me so advantageously as in the tact with which she endeavoured to reconcile her ill-suited guests, and in some measure she succeeded. Christina, gay and volatile, found her dignity a burden, and after a while, laying pride aside, was content to be on a footing with the rest. The Brahams, however, were too forward for her to tolerate; for no sooner did she unbend in the least, than they advanced to familiarity.

"Christina, look there!" cried Miss Leah, the youngest of the sisters.

Christina's face flushed, but she took no notice.

"Miss Dare, I say, look there!"

"Oh, I was not aware it was to me you spoke," replied Christina, with an expression which made the other mutter, "What airs she gives herself; how proud she can look."

Christina turned to Annette, and put her arm through hers. "Come, Annette, let you and me go to that point; I think we shall see very well from there."

"And I will come with you," said the unabashed Miss Braham.

"On second thoughts, I don't think I will go," said Miss Dare, drawing back.

Then walking apart with Jane, she called her to account, in an almost dictatorial tone, for receiving such people at her house. Miss Philipson excused herself with many apologies, but declared that she could not drop their acquaintance.

"Very well," said Christina, "then you must drop ours. I will not have friends who put themselves on

a level with such vulgarians. So the question is, Do you like them or us best?"

On this Miss Philipson professed all manner of love and preference for her dear Christina, and after a little more parley she promised to have no more to do with the Brahams. The morning wore away, and vain were my efforts, repeated from time to time, to induce Christina to move; but on a message being brought from Mrs Philipson that luncheon was ready, I tried to speak more decidedly, saying, "In that case we will take leave, Miss Dare, and return home." For a moment I thought I was going to carry the day, for Christina looked surprised, and answered, "But we shall have to go without Mark; he will never consent to leave so soon."

"Yes, I am sure he will," I replied, "if he hears you are going; I will speak to him myself."

Christina hesitated, and unfortunately Miss Philipson interfered.

"Oh, stay and have a little luncheon; if you desert us I shall have no more pleasure in the day;" and my pupil said, "No, Miss Norris, don't speak to Mark, I shall not go yet; but," she added, as I looked distressed, "we will go directly after luncheon."

Mrs Philipson and Mrs Braham had been enjoying each other's company the whole morning; there was something I did not quite understand in the footing they were on together. In company they were mutually rather distant than otherwise; yet, as I now re-entered the drawing-room, I overheard the Jewish lady address our hostess by the familiar name of Martha.

Mrs Philipson did the honours of her house well. There was a pretty, unpretending luncheon, and she had tact in showing attention to all her guests.

The regatta, as was natural, furnished the principal theme of conversation, and to my dismay I heard it announced that the young gentlemen were going on the water in an open boat. I was too far off from Mark to speak to him; but happening to be seated next Christina, I begged her to remind her cousin of his promise, exacted by his uncle on account of the danger which there must be when the harbour was covered with boats. She refused, denying that Mark's promise had been at all a serious one, and saying that as far as danger went, he was perfectly safe going with Mr Philipson, who was a sailor. The young men rose from table before the rest of the party had finished, and I thus found myself in for probably some hours more, as Christina now resolutely refused to stir until Mark's return.

The afternoon was spent much as the morning had been, with the exception that, instead of any longer seeing aught to admire in the gay scene before us, I now looked upon it almost with disgust. It was a tremendously hot day, where we stood there were neither seats nor shade, and when, at about five o'clock, we returned to the house, what, with exposure to the sun, fatigue from being the whole day in the open air, added to distress of mind, I felt so seriously indisposed as really not to know what to do. Mrs Philipson remarked I was unwell, and kindly proposed that I should lie down on her bed until the young gentlemen re-

turned. I was grateful for her offer and accepted it, feeling unable to retain my seat.

As I rested in her bedroom, I could not help meditating on the singularity of my situation; but my head ached too severely to allow my reflections to be very distinct. I had lain there for nearly an hour, and had fallen into a doze, when I was roused by the loud voices of Mark and his companions. With an emotion of thankfulness that they had met with no accident, I rose, considerably better, and arranged my dress for the walk home.

The drawing-room was closed in and lighted; the table spread with preparations for tea, and the young people, standing in groups in different parts of the room, were waiting till these should be completed. Miss Dare, divested of her bonnet, and with her long curls smoothed into nice order, was seated on the sofa by Mrs Philipson, who was, apparently, rendering herself very agreeable. I went up to Christina for the purpose of begging her to put on her bonnet, when Mrs Philipson said, smilingly,

"As I have used you so ill as to give you no dinner, I thought I could not do less than have tea early, that you may have strength for your walk home, and Miss Dare and Mr Mark for their quadrille."

Christina saw me look aghast at the word quadrille, and said, in a low voice—

"Mrs Philipson pressed us to remain, and we consented. Papa is safe out of the way, and mamma never knows whether we are out or in; so don't plague us any

more about leaving, we shall do so all the sooner for your not bothering."

As usual, I was obliged to submit, and we were now called to table.

The tea was as noisy as half-a-dozen and more young people, all of whom had high spirits, under no restraint of either modesty or good breeding, could make it. The young men appeared all to have had drink. Mark was more boisterous than his wont, and Philipson and Braham were evidently the worse for it. Their conversation was anything but agreeable, their language coarse, and garnished with oaths in a manner the most profane and unpleasant. Mrs Philipson had hitherto seemed to me, on the whole, a nice woman, but she now lost ground in my esteem; for she sat by without taking any notice, or showing that she was the least shocked, except by saying, carelessly, when Christina looked surprised, "Fy, Mr Braham; really, Augustus, you should not;" which playful reproof had not the slightest effect.

After tea the room was cleared for dancing, and Mrs Braham sat down to the piano; Mrs Philipson did not play at all herself, though she seemed familiar with at least the names of the best English performers. In the course of the evening a variety of little disagreeables occurred. Braham and Mark had taken a mutual dislike to each other, and sometimes I feared that a downright quarrel would ensue. Christina, also, was capriciously insolent to the Miss Brahams. All this Mrs Philipson observed, and she said to me, "You are surprised, no doubt, to meet people like the Brahams at

my house; but the truth is, that, though homely, they are a very worthy family; and as, on our arrival here, before we knew who anybody was, they had it in their power to show us some civility, it would not be right to throw them off." She then changed the subject, and made a remark on my pupil, who was standing up in a quadrille with her son. During this day Mrs Philipson had bestowed a great deal of delicate flattery on Christina, and she now praised to me her appearance, manner, and dancing. Christina, as she moved before us through the dance, would certainly have been pronounced by any one a very nice-looking and attractive girl; but I thought with regret how soon she would injure the tone of her manners if she continued to form promiscuous acquaintances.

"And what," asked Mrs Philipson, "is the little boy like? Does he resemble his sister?"

"Not particularly," I replied, "though he is very like his mother."

"Ah, that is different from anything in my family; my son does not resemble me at all; indeed, I don't know where Augustus got his face; though Jane is the very image of her poor, dear father; from him she and Annette have their fair complexions, for I am as black as a crow, and my brother, Sir Henry Aubury, is also very dark."

"Family resemblance is an interesting thing," said I, feeling I was called upon to say something.

"Yes," said Mrs Philipson, "it is a great comfort to me to have before me in my daughter so faithful a

resemblance of the features I can, in this world, never look upon again. He was very handsome," she continued, in a lowered voice; "I will show you his likeness."

I was not prepared for any such mark of confidence as being shown a likeness of the husband who was gone, but Mrs Philipson opened a drawer, and took from thence a red morocco case. It contained a miniature, most exquisitely painted, representing a handsome and distinguished-looking man.

"You see the resemblance, of course," said Mrs Philipson.

I hesitated to reply, for the resemblance she spoke of I did not see. Like Jane's, the features were straight, and the hair and complexion both extremely fair; yet everybody must know how two faces, though possessing such points of similarity, may still be totally different, and so it struck me were these under discussion. It is, perhaps, unjust to form an opinion of character, one way or the other, from the expression of features, but in a degree it is impossible not to do so, and the two countenances indicated very opposite dispositions. The bright, ingenious look which in that of the late Mr Philipson betokened a mind equally intelligent and amiable, was widely dissimilar to the contracted expression of Miss Jane's; hers, whether falsely or not, suggested undoubtedly the idea of bad temper and insincerity. As I could not agree with Mrs Philipson, I contented myself, remarking that it was a pleasing portrait, and was relieved by the approach of Christina.

"What is that?" said she; "a miniature; oh, let me look at it." Mrs Philipson put it into her hand, and asked if she had ever seen any lady like it.

"It is of a very handsome person," said Christina; "but I never saw any one the least like it."

"I think you have," said Mrs Philipson, smilingly, "and you need not look very far off."

"In this room, do you mean?" asked Christina, looking round.

"Look opposite," suggested Mrs Philipson.

"What, not Jane?" said Christina.

"Ah, I see it strikes you," observed Mrs Philipson; "I knew it would."

"But do you mean that Jane is like this gentleman?" asked Miss Dare. "I don't think so."

"My dear, the fact of your saying 'Jane,' shows you see it," said Mrs Philipson.

Christina put up her lip, but did not care enough about the question to differ again, and a lively valse being played, she turned away, and asked Annette to be her partner. They were just setting off when Mr Braham, pertly interfering, said he could not allow such an impropriety as two young ladies valtzing together, and he was, he hoped, a better partner than Miss Annette.

"That depends upon taste, Mr Braham," replied Christina, haughtily withdrawing herself, as he had the impudence to put his arm round her waist. "I much prefer dancing with Annette."

Braham's eyes flashed lightning, and I do not know what might have followed, had not Mr Philipson seen

what passed, and wishing to prevent a *fracas* in his mother's house, called out, "Braham, my sister Jane says you asked her for this dance; you are forgetting your engagement;" whereupon he went off. But it was only the explosion of Braham's wrath which was thus saved, Miss Dare's displeasure was yet to be appeased, and I was amused by Mr Philipson's manœuvre to that effect. He was standing up with one of the Miss Brahams, but, after a moment's hesitation, leaving her, he went to Christina, who was leaning against the wall, looking sulky and offended, and with unwonted respect in his manner, asked her to dance with him. He showed to advantage, though Miss Braham was visibly irritated at this compliment to Christina at her expense.

But there was no keeping at all in my pupils' manners,—at one moment haughtily reserved towards persons whom they disliked, the next they indulged in a familiarity unbecoming even where there was friendship; and the dancing was succeeded by a romping game of blindman's buff, during which, so great was the noise and confusion that I felt heartily ashamed for Christina, though she seemed to have no such feeling for herself. It proceeded, becoming every moment more riotous, until Mrs Philipson, who had been absent from the room for a few minutes, learned from a servant that the shrieks and laughter were heard down in the road, and on returning, she said, with a decision very different from the slight manner in which she had reproved her son for swearing, "Young people, unless you can play more quietly, this game must cease." Some of the party were,

for a moment, not inclined to regard the remark, but a glance passed between Philipson and Jane, and the game was stopped.

Miss Dare now spoke of going home, but she, as well as her cousin, was in such a heat that even I joined in Mrs Philipson's advice, that they should wait a few minutes until they got cool. There was a fine moon, and the evening was light, but Christina was impatient to be gone. Now that a cessation in the amusement allowed her an interval for reflection, which during the morning had been constantly drowned, she was, probably, rather frightened at the length to which her disobedience had this day gone, and, falling into the same fault of self-will at the very moment when I thought she regretted it, she insisted on at once getting ready to set off.

For the first few minutes after leaving the house my companions were engaged speaking over the day, but we had not gone far before, as though struck with the same thought, they checked their flow of spirits, and a word or two having been exchanged aside, Miss Dare turned to me, and, with some apparent embarrassment, inquired whether I intended to peach.

"To do what?"

"To peach—to inform upon us."

"Most assuredly," I replied; "do you suppose that I am to witness such flagrant misconduct, persevered in, too, for an entire day, and not report it to your father?"

Christina looked completely dumfoundered; then turning upon Mark, she accused him of being the means

of getting her into trouble; but for him, she declared, she would never have behaved as she had done. A pretty scrape he had got her into!

It was very rarely that angry words passed between these two, but on this occasion Christina, frightened at what was hanging over her head, and feeling for once that she was powerless to shake my resolution, relieved her uneasiness by upbraiding Mark, the instigator and companion of her fault. Quite in the same tone was his recrimination.

"That is right! throw all the blame on me. My uncle will be harder on his nephew than on his daughter, and most likely will turn me out of the house for this day's work."

This remark brought to my mind the conversation I had held with Mr Dare, in which he threatened to do no less than Mark surmised, on the event of him leading his daughter into mischief, and stopping short, I said, "Mr Mark, if I were to promise to give you one more trial, and this time to say nothing to Mr Dare, would you promise that I shall not again have reason to complain of you?" Mark looked surprised, but protested that he would promise anything I wished.

"My sole motive," continued I, "for even thinking of such a concession is, that I am persuaded you are only too correct in supposing that very serious consequences to you would ensue upon an exposure to your uncle." I then repeated what Mr Dare had said, and ended by observing, "I am unwilling this should happen, the more, as in spite of your faults I at times see

gleams of something better in your nature, which lead me to hope you may improve."

"To be sure, you have great discernment, Miss Norris," said Mark, with an air of satisfaction. "I believe after all you are a good creature; so we will just leave things as they are, and Uncle Godfrey shall never know how we spent to-day."

"Thank you, Mr Mark," I answered; "but I think you are assuming a rather misplaced tone of magnanimity. I have nothing to conceal, and if I promise to be silent on this occasion, you must also promise to behave differently in future."

Both had generosity, and the promises were, with every appearance of sincerity, given. I knew, however, how volatile they were, so could not place in them much confidence, and I almost feared that this concession was but a fresh proof of my weakness. I felt also that I was making a sacrifice for their sakes—a sacrifice, I now see, greater than any one is at liberty to make, even that of my own self-respect; and it was with humiliation I reflected how were our relative situations reversed, when I, the teacher, was so completely in the power of my pupils.

We said no more at that time, and soon afterwards entered the avenue, when we all were startled by the sight of a carriage at the door. An indefinite apprehension took possession of my mind, and that the young people well knew how wrongly they had acted was betrayed by Mark's look of consternation, and whispered, "Here's a precious go!" and Christina's exclamation, "Merciful heaven! papa is returned.'

CHAPTER IX.

TRAITS OF CHARACTER.

ON a nearer approach, we saw that the carriage was not Mr Dare's, but that of the medical man who, in all cases of sickness, attended the family, and the household we found in confusion. Mrs Dare had been seized with a kind of fit, and the servants, in the absence of any of the family capable of directing them, were even more alarmed than was necessary. Little Albert alone retained presence of mind to go for a doctor, and by the time we arrived Mrs Dare had been put to bed, where she lay in the utmost prostration of both mind and body. It was many days before she was able to leave that bed, and weeks ere she was restored to even her usual feeble and precarious health. Christina, on this painful occasion, evinced all the feeling that was desirable. Though she said little on the subject, I could see that she was shocked to think, that while she was out taking forbidden pleasure, her mother had been suffering an attack which might have ended fatally; filled for the time with remorse, she willingly gave up every amusement to sit in the sick-

room, displaying greater affection than might be supposed she could feel towards a parent who, to her, had always been cold and indifferent. In spite of her good intentions, however, she was a very bad nurse; her restless way of moving about being particularly irritating to an invalid, and one whose temper was at no time very even.

"If you will sit at the foot of my bed, Christina," said Mrs Dare, "you must be quiet; that fidgeting puts me mad."

"Don't you like me to sit here?" asked her daughter.

"I don't know; Miss Norris and Albert are both much better nurses." Christina rose, and after this repulse, did not again volunteer her company, nor was she often asked for.

I suppose that the young people congratulated themselves on no questions being asked as to how the day of the regatta had been spent. Mr Dare, receiving on his return the bad news of his wife's illness, was too much concerned about her to think of other things, and for the next several weeks we saw very little of him. The small portion of the day during which he was at home was spent chiefly with his wife in her dressing-room, and the half hour at breakfast was usually all that we were in his company. Being thus left to ourselves the latter as well as early part of the day, so much opportunity was afforded for meeting the Philipsons, that I could hardly expect my pupils to resist the temptation. Those young people had some qualities which, though not such as to entitle them to esteem or admiration among dis-

cerning persons, were of a kind to render them particularly agreeable to their companions, and, doubtless, the good looks of the girls set off in no small degree their other attractions. The youth rested his claims on somewhat different grounds, for he was plain, and in a vulgar style, his figure being short and broad, and his features most ordinary; but his off-hand manner, and apparent carelessness as to what was thought of him, made his want of looks really scarcely a disadvantage. "What matters it what an ugly dog like I do?" he would say; "a handsome fellow like you, Dare, would be different." This, as may be supposed, told. The young ladies flattered Christina as broadly, and with no less success; and when I saw the pains they took to secure an intimacy with my pupils, I could not help suspecting that they had some object to gain, though what I was not sufficiently clever or artful to discover. Had I been aware with how many loans of shillings and half-crowns Philipson was accommodated by Mark, or how many pieces of lace, and ribbon, and new fashions the Miss Philipsons procured from Christina, I should have wondered no longer. As it was, I sometimes feared that I had formed an unjust opinion of them,—that I regarded as too serious those faults which were evident to any one, and imagined them to possess others from which they were really free; for it was only right I should suspect myself, and not unlikely that I should judge them harshly, since they invariably treated me with a degree of haughty neglect exceedingly wounding to one's pride. At first I concluded that they slighted me merely

because I was, as Miss Jane once said, in a subordinate situation, and that it was the governess, not Sarah Norris, whom they disliked; but soon I found my mistake. They had heard from Christina that I did not approve of the acquaintance, and fearing, probably, that I would in some way interfere with it, their aversion to me was very decided, and, what I felt most, they did their utmost to set my young relations against me.

One afternoon, while at work in my own room, which was separated from the school-room by only a wooden partition, I heard the voices of Mark and Christina, in conjunction with those of the Philipsons, in very eager conversation. The first words I caught distinctly were from Philipson.

"Why, do you suppose she is such a fool as not to see that as long as she pets Albert, Mrs Dare's pet, she is sure of continuing in favour? She knows that her berth is a good one, and trust her for practising all the arts of a toady to retain it."

"But I told you before," said Christina, "that she is not a toady, and as for petting Albert, there is no one in the house finds fault with him so much; she always scolds him when he is naughty, and he is so spoilt that he often says he will tell mamma. So you see there, at all events, you are quite mistaken."

Miss Jane, after a pause, replied, "A greater proof than any, we have had of her art; risks losing her patron's favour for the sake of making Albert a good boy! sacrifices everything to a sense of duty! just the sort of thing to take Mr Dare; she knows he is not a

common character, and that common arts would not succeed with him."

She here lowered her voice, but I had heard enough to show me that it was of myself they spoke. I therefore made a sound to let them know I was within hearing. There was silence for a moment in the adjoining room, and then Mr Philipson said, "Playing the eave's-dropper, eh?"

This was an accusation I could not allow to pass unnoticed, and for the sake of the influence I yet retained with my pupils, I thought it necessary to go forward and vindicate myself. Accordingly, entering the room where they were all assembled, I said, in as dignified a manner as I could command, "It was to avoid playing the eave's-dropper, Mr Philipson, that I let you know where I was, and I must request that you will in future refrain from such unjust remarks on my conduct." I was half surprised at my own courage, and had I respected him more I could not have done so. They all looked confused, and Philipson attempted an awkward apology, but his remarks were such as could not be explained away, and after a few minutes, passed in unpleasant restraint, he took Mark out of the room.

But it was not morning visits alone the Philipsons made; they got the habit of coming to tea two or three times a week, our wing being so separated from the rest of the house that it was not likely to be known whether they were there or not. The first time I did not think much of it, as they took refuge with us from a sudden shower of rain, and had a sort of excuse for remaining

the evening; but when a few nights after, on quitting Mrs Dare, with whom I always sat during the half hour her husband was at dinner, I found the three Philipsons in the school-room, the young ladies having laid aside their bonnets, evidently intending to spend the evening, I was both surprised and annoyed, the more, as in addition to disliking their company, by staying late they interfered with our arrangements in a way I particularly disapproved. It was our custom to read prayers and a chapter from the Bible regularly at nine o'clock, and this I did not like to propose before strangers. The former night Albert retired at his usual hour, and I, going with him, saw that he did not neglect his prayers, but his sister and cousin, I have reason to believe, went to bed without reading or praying at all. Unwilling that this should recur, I told Christina that it would be as well to give her friends a hint to leave rather earlier, but she replied, "If Albert is sleepy, there is no reason why we should not have prayers while they are here, they can have no objections." I only desired to know her wishes on the subject.

The ostensible object of this visit was that Miss Philipson might procure from Christina a pattern by which to make up a new dress, which was to be worn, she informed us, at a very gay pic-nic party. Christina promised to accommodate her, and inquired,

"By whom is your party given? You have quite dropped the Miss Brahams, as you promised, have you not?"

"Quite," replied Miss Philipson, with a sweet smile; "we don't make promises to break them."

"Is it Judge and Mrs Lancefield's pic-nic?" asked Christina. "Mamma had an invitation, though she was too ill to think of going."

"Do none of your party go then?" said Miss Philipson, not heeding the question.

"Oh, no. You know I am not come out yet, and I did not even show mamma the cards; but it will be a very nice party. Are you to be there?"

"Yes, we are to be there," replied the other, and soon afterwards the three girls left the room together to inspect a box of finery which Christina had just received from England. At the same time Mark, on a wish being expressed by his friend to that effect, accompanied him to the butler's pantry to try whether a glass of wine was not procurable, and Philipson was not satisfied until more than one glass had been surreptitiously bestowed upon him.

Meanwhile Miss Dare and her companions were busy discussing dress in the bed-room of the former, and from what I unavoidably overheard of their conversation, I found that Miss Philipson was not satisfied to take a paper pattern, but wished to have a certain dress home with her, to which Christina would not at first consent, for fear of some injury befalling it, the dress having never yet been worn. Miss Philipson, however, promising to take the greatest care, she at last reluctantly consented. Suddenly there was an exclamation of "Oh, Lord!" from Annette, succeeded by a bustle, and the splashing of water, and then Christina said, "Thank goodness, it is out!"

From this I conjectured they had set fire to something; and though it was then "out," I went to see what had happened; but ere I turned the handle of the bed-room door I caught words which made me pause. There was nothing Mrs Dare was so nervous about as fire, nothing made her so angry as carelessness in handling it, and Miss Dare began to express apprehensions of a scolding from her mamma.

"But she need not know that this is your toilet cover," said Annette. "Tell the housemaid to put it out of sight."

"No, that won't do," replied Christina, "for mamma's maid always looks over the linen, and this room and Miss Norris' are the only two furnished alike."

"In that case it is very easily managed," said Annette; "we have nothing to do but to change the covers, give the burnt one to Miss Norris; it will be easy to persuade her she did it without knowing, and then the lecture will come upon her."

I waited a moment, not so much to hear how Christina would receive this proposal, as that I was shocked with such duplicity, though it afforded me sincere pleasure to hear her exclaim, "I would rather bear twenty scoldings than put blame on a person unjustly; leave the toilet covers as they are, Annette, I won't have anything of the kind." Her determination was answered by a laugh from Annette, and commendation from Miss Philipson of this fresh proof of the nobleness of disposition which she had so often admired in her dear Christina.

The party did not reassemble until past nine o'clock;

they were then all talking with so much levity that I scarcely knew whether to call their attention to serious subjects. Albert had, however, yawned several times, and I took the opportunity to observe that it was the hour at which we always had prayers. Christina and Mark immediately assented, and Miss Dare, placing the Bible on the table, said, "You can have no objections, Jane, we have prayers every night, and Albert wants to go to bed." Miss Philipson looked as if she was on the point of bursting into a fit of laughter, but checking the inclination, with a mock grave expression replied, "What a nice custom! Of course I should be delighted, only I really feel so faint, I must go into the air for a little; I was on the point of proposing a turn in the veranda when you spoke." Her high colour was very unlike the complexion of a person suffering as she said; but she rose, and Mr Philipson, with a politeness he rarely showed to his sisters, offered her his arm, saying, "You do look rather pale, Jane, I will come with you." Annette prepared to follow them, but Mark called reproachfully after her, "Are you going, too, Annette?"

"I think that Jane ——" she stood still.

"Come," said I, "here is a seat for you, Miss Annette." She took it, and during prayers behaved, I must admit, with perfect propriety. They left soon afterwards, so might as well have spared us this exhibition of their irreligion.

When they were gone Albert expressed astonishment at their conduct, and his sister did not defend it, for religion was not wholly neglected in Mr Dare's family,

and although his children had been never taught to carry the spirit of Christianity into every-day life, its outward forms they had been accustomed to observe and reverence, so that Christina could not see these slighted without a feeling of repugnance. Her principles, however, were not sufficiently established to be proof against the influence of bad companions, and when I heard that the Miss Philipsons were in the habit of scoffing at serious persons, mentioning with contempt the most holy services; and from Mark, that their brother, if, as was often the case, elevated with a glass too much, was frequently blasphemous in his language and the sentiments he uttered, I trembled as I thought what effect this might have on my own pupils.

But such example, while it had only too visible an effect, was unable wholly to mar characters intended for so much that is good, and in the midst of folly, to use no harsher word, they gave occasionally proofs of dispositions which I sighed to think should be so little cultivated.

In our walk one morning we had gone for shade to a part of the domain that is not much frequented. At a little distance was a young man, to whom Christina directed her cousin's attention.

"I have been looking at him," rejoined Mark; "it is that beast, Braham."

"We will take no notice of him," said Christina, "and he will hardly presume to speak to us."

We walked on, Christina holding her head rather higher than usual, and Mark with his eyes fixed on the

opposite side of the road. The youth held in his hand a cane, with which he was switching the grass, and as we passed he dipped it, with affected carelessness, into a very dirty ditch close by, and threw a quantity of mud and water over Mark's white jacket and trousers. In high indignation Mark turned round, but Braham observing, "You think yourself a very fine gentleman," laughing at the same time in a tone that might have exasperated a cooler spirit than Mark Dare's, dipped the stick again into the water as if to repeat the impertinence. Mark's face flushed scarlet, and without giving a moment to reflection, he sprang at him and struck him with all his force on the face. Braham was standing on the edge of a rough slope which descended abruptly to the sea-shore; as he staggered backwards under the blow, the loose stones gave way beneath his feet, and losing his balance he fell heavily down the declivity, striking at every step against the projecting pieces of rock. Mark instantly looked sorry for what he had done, and hastened to help him to rise, hoping he was not much hurt. But the other neither stirred nor spoke, and a stream of blood was seen to dye his shirt, and trickle through the stones. Mark turned as pale as ashes, and Christina exclaimed, "You have done it now, Mark! You have settled his hash for him, and no mistake." Mark pushed her aside, beckoned to me, and in a tremulous voice asked whether I thought Braham was dead.

I stooped down, and made an examination, as well as I could, then was able to say that though the wound

appeared a rather deep cut in the back of the neck, I hoped it would prove not even dangerous; and we had just tied a handkerchief over it, when the young man opened his eyes and struggled to rise. Mark eagerly assisted him, but Braham pushed him off rudely, and attempted to scramble up by himself; his head, however, grew giddy, and he fell back again, saying he wanted none of our help, and would sit there until he was able to walk home alone. He eyed Mark with malevolence, and hinted that he would be better pleased if relieved of the presence of us all.

"This will never do," said Mark, after a few minutes. "Christina, I wish you would look along the road if there is a cab to be had; or stay, if you will remain here I 'll go myself."

He ran off with great speed, and, unpleasant as it was to keep watch thus over the wounded Jew, we remained. Mark reappeared shortly with a cab, and into it Braham was assisted. The driver knew him at once, saying, as soon as he saw him, "A son of old Brahams, who keeps the curiosity shop in Clarence Street." Mark desired him to drive carefully; then, to avoid irritating Braham with his company, yet choosing to see him safe home, got on to the box. He joined us at the Pines in an hour or so, looking flushed and excited, and told us, with great interest, that Braham was much better. He took pains also to clear him from blame, assuring us that the fault had been his own entirely; he had no right to pitch into him in the way he did; he would go and inquire for him the first thing the following morning. He

did so, but with all this did not allow himself to be drawn into a visiting acquaintance at the house, and the steadiness with which he kept to this resolution proved to me how completely it had been inclination, and not, as he always urged, circumstances, that had led to the acquaintance with the Philipsons.

During the hour I usually spent with Mrs Dare, while her husband was at dinner, I often tried to entertain her by reading aloud the newspapers. One evening, among the passengers of a ship just arrived from England was the name Sir Lawrence Delafield, which, as there are few titles in the colony, caught her attention; and on Mr Dare entering the room she inquired if he could tell her anything about this new arrival.

"Yes," was the reply, "he brings a letter of introduction to me, which he presented at my office this morning. He is a very young man, not more than of age, I should think; you must make haste and get well, Harriet, that we may ask him to dinner."

"Yes, certainly. What brings him out here?"

"The necessity of doing something to improve his means, I imagine; his family property, I believe, is dreadfully encumbered."

"He will be a nice addition to the society," observed Mrs Dare.

"That remains to be seen. He does not look very bright; however, it is too soon to judge; he is gentlemanly, at all events."

Mrs Dare had now reached that stage of convalescence at which a little stimulus was all that was needed

to enable her to resume her usual habits. This was supplied by her wish to show some attention to Sir Lawrence Delafield, and being tired of the monotony of her sick-chamber, she very shortly after the above conversation arranged a dinner party, to which the young baronet was invited, and came.

I had opportunity of seeing him in the evening. He was a fair, insipid looking young man, with a very gentlemanly air, and easy, indolent manners: certainly, as Mr Dare had said, far, seemingly, from bright, and little fitted, either by energy or any other quality, to push his fortunes in this colony, which was the sole purpose of his coming out, his father, who had recently died, having outrun his means and left his property so heavily mortgaged as to make it needful that his heir should do something for himself. What we soon afterwards heard of the conduct of Sir Lawrence was not wise; instead of proceeding as quickly as possible to the station of the gentleman with whom was his intended destination, and applying himself to acquire "Colonial experience," he found it impossible to tear himself away from the gaieties of Sydney, and lingered on, in expensive rooms at a hotel, reckless that he was thus throwing away his own prospects, and spending his money as though it had been a year's income.

Some days before this dinner party took place at the Pines, Christina begged Miss Philipson to return her dress, which had been kept twice as long as had been promised, and, after some further delay, Jane and her sister accompanied a maid-servant, who brought it up

one evening. Miss Philipson made many apologies for having detained it so long, but Christina, who was good-natured, replied it was all right, she had not had occasion for it before, and began to undo the bandbox, which had been carried into the school-room.

"Never mind looking at it just now," said Miss Philipson, "we have only five minutes to talk."

Christina, however, continued to untie the cord, talking as she did so.

"Tell me about your party," said she to Annette, who stood beside her, Jane having moved away. "Had you a pleasant pic-nic with Mrs Lancefield."

"Mrs Lancefield!" repeated Annette. "We don't know her."

"Why, who gave your pic-nic?" asked Christina, quickly.

"The Brahams," replied Annette.

Christina changed colour. "Jane," said she, "you told me you were going to Mrs Lancefield's pic-nic, and that you had given up the Brahams; what did you mean by that?"

Miss Jane hesitated for one moment, as she cast a very black look of displeasure at her sister, but then replied, smiling, and with a readiness which showed with how little remorse she could bring her tongue to utter a falsehood—

"I had no idea you would be so easily taken in; I thought you knew that we did not know the Lancefields, and would see the joke."

I was so provoked I could not help saying, "I

confess, Miss Philipson, I do not see where the joke lies."

"Ah, Miss Norris, I never expected you would," said Miss Philipson. "You know we have often laughed about your incapacity for taking jokes."

"And I suppose," said Christina, gravely, "your assurance that you had broken with the Brahams at the very time you were engaged to their party, was a joke too."

"No," replied Miss Philipson; "I committed an error there, but it was from regard to you. I am always so unwilling to vex those I love in anything; you dislike the Brahams, yet we cannot break with them."

"And why not?" asked Miss Dare.

"Circumstances make it impossible," replied Miss Philipson, hastily. "There, surely, may be in a family private reasons, which I do not see that you, or anybody, has a right to question."

"Certainly," said Christina. "You, of course, are at liberty to choose your companions from whatever rank you prefer; but, as I told you before, I neither can nor will associate with people who have acquaintances among shopkeepers."

"My dear Christina," said Jane, "your pride is at present a little offended, but ask yourself the question, 'Could we give up people who have shown us civility?' would it be right? Suppose some one was to ask us to give you up?"

Christina was silenced, and though she still looked dissatisfied, said, as she shook out her dress—

"Well, well, let it pass, we will say no more about it.

I shall wear this to-morrow; but, Jane, what's this?" she added, as her eyes fell on a red stain, made apparently by some fruit, in the front width.

"What is it?" said Miss Philipson, bending forward to look. "It must have been there before; indeed, I think I saw it when you gave it me—I am almost sure I did."

She spoke confidently, but I observed that, little as she was given to blushing, her complexion was many shades deeper than usual.

"But it was no such thing," exclaimed Christina, angrily; "you have spoilt my dress, Jane."

"Not I, I am sure," retorted the other.

"You certainly have; look, this was not here when you got it."

Miss Philipson's eyes flashed, and she seemed on the point of saying something very disagreeable, but she made a strong effort to command her temper, and in a gentle tone said—

"I am sure, my dear Christina, you are too generous to suspect me of anything I don't confess. If you think the dress has got injured in my keeping, you can have mine instead."

"Your trumpery!" replied Christina, thrown off her guard, but the next instant recollecting herself, she said, "I beg your pardon, I did not mean to say that, only you know a dress made at home is not to be compared to one from a first-rate London dressmaker."

Annette now interfered, reminding her sister that it was getting late, and their mother would be expecting them.

"You are right," answered Jane; "in my regret for having, however innocently, vexed Miss Dare, I was forgetting the hour. Good-bye, dear, how well you are looking to-night."

Christina did not return her kiss, but drew back her head coldly, and as soon as her two *friends* were gone, again took up her dress. I had been examining it, and had discovered various other marks and stains, which I pointed out to her; she was puzzled, and so far from being satisfied with Miss Philipson's explanation, she saw there was falsehood at the bottom of it. The sleeves were a good deal rubbed, and the bottom frayed, and I observed, "The dress has all the appearance of having been worn; look here, Miss Philipson is not quite so tall as you, and this has touched the ground." Christina looked, and exclaimed in indignation, "I see it all, Jane Philipson has worn my dress!"

"And a very clever trick, too," said Mark, at that moment entering. "What a row you have been making; I was quite frightened to come in."

"It is a vexatious thing, Mr Mark," said I, "to have a handsome dress spoilt, and to find such meanness in one's friends."

"Oh, I don't call it exactly mean," interposed Christina, "that is so shocking; but very selfish of Jane."

"Well, if she is selfish she is only like all the rest of the world," said Mark; "everybody is selfish. I am sure Miss Norris often thinks us very selfish for plaguing her as we do, and it is not very charitable to condemn other people when we have the same faults."

"It is not charity, Mr Mark," said I, "that makes you blindly shut your eyes to the faults of your companions; the duty of every person is to understand the character of those with whom they associate."

"Oh, nonsense, Miss Norris," interrupted Christina, snatching her dress from me. "I was angry, but you make too great a fuss; Jane was quite right in saying you don't know how to take a joke, but I do." So saying, she ran out of the room, bearing with her the misused dress, whose condition was not improved by the carelessness with which it was huddled into the wardrobe.

One advantage, and one only, arose from this intimacy, and many and great as were the drawbacks, the single counterbalancing good was not to be altogether overlooked. In consequence of my two elder pupils having so many subjects of interest together, Albert was thrown more with me, and I had thus opportunity to study his disposition, and discovered the germs of many good qualities, of which otherwise I might have remained ignorant. This little boy had been always undervalued, and in supposing him a mere commonplace child I did him an injustice, since he had, I now found, much natural amiability, a mind docile and ingenious, and a susceptibility of conscience which made him anxious to understand and to do his duty. His abilities were not above mediocrity, but he possessed a desire for information, and a capability of application which compensated for his want of quickness, and in most branches of study he was actually further advanced than his cousin

Mark, who was five years older, and by nature far cleverer. The conversations we held together were very satisfactory to me, and his openness to conviction when I showed him the sin of indulging the selfishness and fretfulness to which he was addicted, and the earnestness with which he set himself to correct these faults, gave every promise of future goodness.

CHAPTER X.

A SQUATTER'S VALENTINE.

AND there was another to whom I would fain hope I was the instrument of some little good; this was Annette Philipson. She was less in favour with my pupils than either her brother or sister, and often, when Christina and Jane walked away together, and Philipson and Mark deserted us, she would join me, and from what I thus saw of her I perceived that she was by no means really unamiable, and had she had good guidance and example might have done very well; as it was, she was entirely under the influence of her brother and sister, and when tempted by them to anything wrong, would excuse herself by the plea that Jane and Augustus would be angry if she refused. Her character was weak, and though there were in it materials which, under a course of good instruction, might have been turned to account, she had the faults peculiar to a cowardly disposition. Of these the most serious was insincerity; it was impossible to place any reliance on her word, and her duplicity was of that petty kind, which made her propose the change of toilet covers to

Christina, and mostly exercised to save herself from blame. It was not, perhaps, my place to notice this; yet she was so young, and so good-natured, that I ventured occasionally to give her indirect advice, and once something led us to discuss the subject unreservedly. Having committed a piece of negligence that she expected would bring upon her a scolding at home, she mentioned coolly the excuse she intended to make, seeming to pique herself on the art with which it was contrived. As she laughingly half appealed to me for approval, I expressed my opinion, and spoke, I believe, rather at length in favour of truth, and on the meanness of dissimulation. She listened, though it was difficult to tell whether or not arguments had weight with her, and at last she observed,

"It is cleverer, Miss Norris, to invent a little; anybody can state a thing just as it is, but to hit upon an excuse which sounds like truth requires invention and cunning."

"Do not you know, Miss Annette," I replied, "that cunning has been called the wisdom of a little mind? In many things, I may truly say, I look upon myself as very far from clever, but not for my deficiency in the power of inventing falsehoods. I was, I am thankful to say, early taught to scorn deceit, and to admire the beauty and dignity of truth."

"You speak the truth, because you were accustomed to do so from childhood," said Annette. "I think people very much do as they are taught when young. Sometimes I almost wish I had received better lessons,"

and something like a sigh escaped the poor girl; "but both mamma and Jane, I am sure, think it clever to invent a good lie."

I was shocked to think, both of what were her principles on this important point, and that she should have been so wofully led astray by those whose duty it was to guide and improve her; but I knew, alas, that falsehood, mean as it is, is not confined to the lower orders of society. While Annette paused, there rose to my recollection the pleasing portrait Mrs Philipson had shown me of her late husband; there was in that countenance an expression so peculiarly open and sincere, that I felt from his lips no words but those of truth could proceed, and I said, rather diffidently,

"But surely there was one who taught you better things? Mrs Philipson showed me a likeness of your father; did he not give you good lessons?"

"My father," said Annette, turning round quickly; "there is something about him, Miss Norris, I can't understand. I never can think of him as like that picture."

"You were very young, I believe, when he died," said I; "do you not remember him?"

"I think I do; but I suppose I am mistaken, for in my imagination he has not one point of resemblance to that picture; he is more like Augustus, but then I know I have forgotten many things. I had a bad illness about the time he died, and I almost think it deranged my head a little, sometimes I suppose things so very different from what mamma tells me they really are."

She pressed her hand to her brow as if to clear up her thoughts, and with a look of bewilderment continued, "We lived in a cottage by the seaside; I was eight or nine years old when we went there, though before then I had the fever, and while I was ill my father died; we were then in a town, I know, for I remember the streets and shops, but the rest is all confusion."

"Do not you remember any little incidents of your childhood?" I asked.

"No," replied Annette, "I remember very little; only one or two scenes which, as it were, stand out. Papa, I think, cannot have been a good man, for I have a recollection of nights when he came home drunk, and quarrelled with my mother; and I remember going to the farthest part of the house, and being frightened to hear him swearing, and mamma talking very loud and angry."

I felt as if the poor girl's head was indeed a little deranged, though whether or not she was correct in the character which, by her description, so much belied the pleasing portrait, I could not but feel sorrow for one whose earliest recollections were of domestic discord, and the harmony of her family disturbed by a drunken father and contentious mother. I reflected how much more blessed had I been, and my thoughts recurred, with renewed gratitude and love, to the happy home of my childhood, hallowed in the remembrance of my father's lessons, my mother's quiet, untiring goodness, and the affection and companionship of my brother.

As the Philipsons' influence increased, my own per-

ceptibly declined, and had my pupils seen the power which was artfully exercised over them, they would, I am sure, have shaken it off. In everything they did together there was a great show of deference to the wishes of Christina and Mark, but it was only show, the others in reality uniformly bent them to their own purpose. I believed that could I show them how, while they thought they acted on all occasions as pleased themselves, they were but puppets in the hands of more designing persons, it might have the effect of checking the intimacy, when no other representations had weight; but such was their perverseness, that whatever I said they determined was spoken with intent to manage them.

At this time Miss Jane's character, through a jest of Mark's, was exhibited in a very ludicrous point of view. Mr Henry Dare came on a visit to the Pines, and often during the hours when his brother was in his office, and other gentlemen for the most part similarly engaged, he joined us in our walks, chiefly, I believe, to keep up acquaintance with his son, and he closely, though silently, observed all the young people. With Mark he still was dissatisfied, and with reason; the boy neglected his studies, and was nearly as ignorant as when first sent to school. Mr Henry Dare drew unfavourable comparisons between him and Albert, whose desire for information rendered his cousin's deficiencies the more striking. Frequently he came upon us in the garden while Albert, seated with me in an arbour, was reading aloud, as he was fond of doing; and once he asked the little boy why he withdrew so much from his sister and cousin.

"They don't want me," Albert replied; "they say I am too soft."

"I very much wish," said Mr Dare, "that Mark had a little of your softness; it would be very becoming in Christina."

The Philipsons occasionally met us in our walks, and with Miss Philipson's appearance Mr Dare was a good deal struck. In conversing with strangers she was always on her good behaviour, and he pronounced her not only handsome, but a sensible and amiable young woman. This praise Mark repeated to Jane, and that young lady, ever on the outlook for attention, attributed to it more importance a great deal than it deserved, and while she affected to treat the subject as a jest, evidently believed that Mr Dare had been really very much smitten, and was on the point of asking her to become his wife.

The next day when he was with us, Jane took care to join us in our walk, and professed great interest in hearing all about the bush, which, in exact contradiction of opinions we had a dozen times heard her express, she declared must be the most charming abode. Mr Henry Dare's establishment was, by all accounts, one of those large and well-ordered concerns where none of the comforts, and few of the refinements, of life are wanting. A wealthy squatter in his distant home, in the midst of his almost countless acres, gathers around him the appliances not only of material comfort, but of mental enjoyment and improvement; if originally a man of education, especially of cultivated tastes, he does not

deteriorate, either in mind or manners, because he spends months at a time without visiting a town. His house is well furnished, his daily table handsomely appointed; booksellers, both in Sydney and England, have orders to forward him periodicals and other new publications; very little bush roughness is to be tasted in such quarters, for the amenities of civilised life are there found combined with the overflowing abundance of the country.

"The bush must be delightful," observed Miss Philipson a second time. "The—the freedom of the life must be so captivating; still I think that an unmarried squatter must sometimes rather miss ladies' society."

"When do we not miss ladies' society?" said Mr Dare, gallantly, "as the poet says—

'Man the hermit sighed, till woman smiled.'"

Miss Jane simpered and pretended to blush.

"I don't think you have become much of a hermit," said she, "when you can pay such pretty compliments."

At the door of his brother's office Mr Dare left us, and as we proceeded together up Wooloomooloo Hill, Mark observed, "Upon my word! my father is coming it pretty strong, I think; poetry, too! It is quite clear he does not wish to be a solitary hermit much longer." He addressed Jane, but winked aside to Christina.

"Certainly," said Miss Philipson, "Mr Henry Dare is the most agreeable and handsomest man I ever met with."

"That is satisfactory for me," observed Mark, "for I believe I am like my father."

"You are like him, Dare," replied Miss Philipson, "but I would not flatter you by saying that you are, or ever will be, equal to your father."

For his own amusement, Mark encouraged her in the idea she had taken up, and this supposed admiration on the part of Mr Dare was made the foundation of a very wrong jest. Valentine's day came round, and a few evenings previously Christina and Jane had said how much they would like to receive a valentine, and they agreed that should either get one it was to be shown to the other. On the morning of the well-known day Christina received by post a letter enclosing the following verses :—

"I fain would tell a tender tale,
And pour a lover's prayer,
And in soft verse my hopes express,
To win a lady fair.
But far from the haunts of polished men,
Can poetry flow from the squatter's pen?
No, harsh the measure, and rude the line,
In which he must woo his valentine.

"Though white his flocks on the boundless plain,
Though his herds range far and free,
Though he ride a king o'er his wide domain,
And his home may pleasant be;
Yet dare he hope a lady fair
Would think that dwelling sweet,
Nor give a sigh to the city gay,
Where her bright eyes from day to day
Saw lovers at her feet?

"But if with true and constant mind,
She can throw those glittering joys behind,
Methinks her future life should prove
That mine is a true and faithful love;
For if she can prize a constant heart,
Such a constant heart is mine;
That death alone from her shall part
Her faithful valentine."

Christina had a hearty laugh in the school-room over these verses, but almost immediately taxed her cousin as the composer. Mark denied the charge, but he had not sufficient command of countenance to do so successfully, and soon, indirectly, owned them as his.

"Well," said Christina, "how Jane Philipson would like to have got this."

"Oh, capital!" exclaimed Mark; "it will be famous fun: give it to me and I'll fold it up."

"The only thing is," said Christina, "that as you wrote it for me, I don't like to give it to her."

"Oh, never mind," replied her cousin, "I 'll write you plenty of verses now I 've begun."

The valentine was enclosed in a fresh envelope, and Mark, as he directed it in a feigned hand, asked my opinion as to whether there was any harm in what they were about.

"It is foolish enough," I replied.

"What do we do that is not foolish?" said they. "You always tell us not to do what is wrong."

The letter was posted, and as we walked away after depositing it, Mark observed, "Jane will certainly be-

lieve it comes from my father; I do think it is such a joke, her setting her cap at him!"

This turn given to the folly I had not anticipated, and rather horror-struck, I said to Mark, "That is surely not your intention in sending the verses?"

"To be sure, Miss Norris, where else would be the point of the joke? and you said yourself there was no harm in it."

I had not seen any harm in simply sending her a valentine to create a little mystery and amusement; but how was it that undertakings which, managed by anybody else would be blameless, in the hands of my misguided pupils invariably turned to evil?

They were, of course, curious to know the success of their plot, and the following day persuaded me to call with them at Mrs Philipson's. Jane met us very gaily dressed, contrary to her usual custom, which was to be at home, though neat and nice, always plain. From the studied elegance of her toilette this morning, Christina supposed she was going out.

"No," she replied, "I am not going out this morning."

"Perhaps she expects visitors at home," observed Annette, with some archness. "Jane is very much admired, you know, Christina."

"You silly thing, Annette," retorted her sister; "you are so vain you think nobody can be admired but yourself."

"She can't think that," said Mark, "when she knows who admires you so much."

Miss Jane slightly coloured, and said, in an indecided tone, that she thought that was all nonsense. Mark glanced from under his eyelashes at Christina, but Mrs Philipson was in the room, and conversation proceeded on general topics. Jane, however, led Mark to speak of the bush, fishing, with evident interest in the subject, for information respecting Mr Henry Dare's station, and his mode of life in the country.

"My father's is a very fine station," said Mark; "the only thing that makes it not altogether a desirable residence is, that the blacks sometimes are troublesome; it is very rarely that they attack a station, but every now and then they come down in a body from the scrub."

Miss Jane's countenance fell in a manner that was quite amusing, and Mark, making an effort to command his own, pursued, "If on these occasions they attack only the store, it is all very well, but they very much prefer human flesh to beef and flour, and it is always the women they try to get—they say they are the most delicate eating; they generally despatch one unfortunate creature with a tomahawk, and carry her off to the scrub."

Miss Philipson's features expressed so much both of dismay and of credulity, that I could not refrain from saying, "Don't mind him, Miss Philipson, he is quizzing you."

Mrs Philipson was here called out of the room, and Christina immediately inquired whether either of her friends had received a valentine.

"Annette, for all she prides herself on her pretty face,

got none, but I did," said Jane, with a satisfaction which seemed to arise as much from her sister's disappointment as from the compliment to herself.

"Well, I had one also," said Christina, "and if you will show me yours, I will tell you about mine."

Miss Philipson demurred, "I don't think I can let that bargain hold; I am not inclined to show you mine, though I think I guess, Christina, who sent yours,—your cousin, Mark."

"Me!" repeated Mark, with the most innocent face; "as if I could write a line of poetry! though I almost wonder I can't, for my father has a very pretty turn that way." This observation, as two pair of watchful eyes detected, was not thrown away. "Won't you tell us anything about your valentine?" added he; "what sort of person should you think it is who writes it? Can you form any conjecture as to his profession?"

"Yes," said Miss Philipson, "I think he is a squatter."

"A squatter! then you may guess what squatter."

"I may guess," simpered Miss Jane.

"To be sure, you can; my father, it must be. Well, you won't disappoint his hopes, I am sure, Jane; and you will be a good mother to me, won't you?"

Jane, however, seemed to feel that she had gone now rather too far, for, telling Mark he was a foolish fellow, she turned to Christina, and asked some question about her valentine.

"I can't show it you just now," replied Christina, "for I have not got it; but I daresay I can repeat some of it."

She began the first verse. At the opening line there appeared in Miss Philipson's face extreme surprise, which gave way, as the verses proceeded, to a very puzzled air. But Christina could not go through with it, and she and Mark, glancing at each other, burst into a loud fit of laughter; at the same moment Jane sprang from her chair, with a face perfectly scarlet, and exclaimed, "How scandalous! how insolent! if you have done it, I'll be revenged." Her anger Christina and Mark were too much amused to heed, and their only answer was fresh peals of laughter, in which Annette, good-natured as she generally was, heartily joined, saying she must confess she was not sorry that Jane's vanity had got a fall.

A period had now arrived to which I had been looking forward with dread. The visit of Mr Henry Dare was concluded, and he had prevailed on his brother to accompany him home, and spend a short time at his station. Little attention as Mr Dare seemed to bestow on what passed in his family, I had an idea that his presence acted as the solitary restraint on the young people; that unruly as they always were, they would be still more so when he was absent, and it was with an uneasiness I cannot describe that I saw the carriage in which he and his brother departed drive away.

CHAPTER XI.

A TRIP TO PARRAMATTA.

"THIS day week is my birthday," observed Christina. "I have always a party; Mark, help me to think whom to invite."

I took up an almanac to see on what day it fell, and remarked, "Your birthday is on Shrove Tuesday, Miss Dare."

"What of that? Shrove Tuesday won't prevent us amusing ourselves."

"Oh no; in the North of England, where I come from, I have seen some old-fashioned games occasionally kept up."

The word games had always a charm for Christina, and she asked of what kind was the amusement.

"Oh, silly enough; trying fortunes, looking into destiny, you may call it."

"Well, but tell us about it," said Mark.

"There is a great variety, I believe, but the kind I have commonly seen we used to call casting eggs, and trying for a ring in brose. For the latter, must be pre-

pared a bowl of meal and water, into which some person drops a wedding-ring, and stirs the mixture round until no one can tell whereabouts it is. Each of the unmarried guests is helped to a spoonful, and whoever finds the ring is to be first married."

"All those things are about getting married," said Mark.

"Many; but the next I shall tell you of is for one's destiny in a general way. This is done by breaking a raw egg on the edge of a tumbler of water, dropping into it the white, which rises in various forms, sometimes in very fantastic ones, and according to the explanation given so is the young person's destiny; for instance, you might be trying it, Mr Mark, and see what looked like a ship"——

"That would mean I was to be a sailor," interrupted Mark; "or to make sea voyages, I understand; is that all?"

"Not quite; the yolks of the eggs are meanwhile made into small fritters, and in one there is a sixpence, dropped into the batter while it is on the fire, so that not even the cook knows in which pancake it is. Every person takes one, and whoever is the possessor of the sixpence is to be the richest of the party."

"It would be some fun," said Christina. "I am glad you have told us of it; and if mamma has no objection, I will have it on my birthday; it will be new, too, for I don't believe any of the people I shall ask have ever seen it."

They began to arrange about the party, and to decide

who were to be asked. Mrs Dare did not on these occasions interfere, farther than restricting them to the children of her own acquaintances, and this being understood Christina settled it her own way. She got a piece of paper, and wrote down the names of the intended guests. A list of ten or twelve was made out, in which were those of the Miss Lyalls, the Miss Hills, and their little brother, and three or four of Mark's school-fellows. The next question that arose was how were they to be entertained, as the amusement we had just spoken of would occupy but a short time. Christina, however, was at no loss, and pronounced that a round game at cards would be generally liked, and just the thing.

"Don't you think," said I, "that a set of lively young people like you might find something better to do than playing cards?"

"Why?" asked Christina, "there is no harm in playing cards; you surely don't think there is?"

"I have always heard them objected to by persons whom I respect," I answered.

"Ah, gambling, no doubt, but not such play as ours will be—*vingt'un* at threepence or sixpence a dozen."

"I differ with you," I said; "I think that even that sort of play is to be objected to; it is, to say the least, a very profitless amusement."

"But I don't collect my friends with a view to profit them, Miss Norris," said Christina; "and I am not aware that we shall derive any particular edification by trying our fortunes in the way you have instructed us."

I could not argue against this, though my own opinion, that it would be better if she entertained her friends in almost any other way, was not altered; and before we dropped the subject I remarked, that if any of the young people were inclined to cheat it was putting temptation in their way.

"Oh! nothing in the world is more unlikely," replied Christina; "and at any rate, we are not the keepers of their consciences; if they do choose to cheat we are not answerable."

Nothing was said about asking the Philipsons. Miss Dare did not venture to solicit her mother's permission, and also suspected that they might be thrown out in a party where they knew none of the other visitors. She foolishly, however, spoke of it to Miss Philipson, who threw out very broad hints of wishing to be invited; she was sure it would be such a charming party, she hoped she would hear all about it after it was over. Christina was not quite in good humour with her, in consequence of the affair of the dress, but she at last said,

"To tell you the truth, I wish I could ask you, but you know you have not a visiting acquaintance with mamma."

This gave Miss Philipson an opening to speak her wishes plainly.

"Mrs Dare's delicate health," said she, "is, no doubt, the reason why she has never called on mamma. I think it would be a very good thing if we were to break the ice, and make the first call."

Christina was not of an age to appreciate fully the for-

wardness of this proposition, though even she was a little startled, and replied, rather hesitatingly—

"Well, if you like to try, Jane, mamma may be pleased, and if she is inclined she can ask you to the party."

"It might be as well," suggested Miss Philipson, "if you would prepare Mrs Dare a little for our visit; you might say that you have met us in walks, and so on, and that we intend to do ourselves the honour of waiting upon her."

When Christina delivered Miss Philipson's message, Mrs Dare expressed surprise, saying, that if she desired the acquaintance it was her place to call on Mrs Philipson—she was not too much of an invalid for that; however, she supposed it was well meant. Christina saw that this was no time to request permission to invite them, and unfortunately for the favourable impression she wished to give of her friends, Philipson that night persuaded Mark to go out with him on the harbour. Mrs Dare was alarmed by her nephew's non-appearance at the usual hour, and being informed what he had been about, felt irritated against the companion who had detained him, and tempted him on the water.

The following day Miss Philipson, accompanied by her brother, called; and as I chanced to be in the drawing-room at the time, I had an opportunity of observing their behaviour during this visit. That they were desirous to show to advantage was clear; for their conversation was studied, and their manners had far more *retenue* than usual. Mrs Dare spoke to Mr Philip-

son of the alarm she had received in consequence of Mark's boating excursion, adding, that she had a great dislike to his going on the water at all, and the previous night was too stormy for any one to venture.

"It was, no doubt," replied Mr Philipson, "and so I told Dare, but he was very obstinate, and when I found he would not be advised by me, I thought that I had best accompany him."

This stroke told immensely. Mrs Dare had no suspicion that Mr Philipson had reversed the story; and while she thanked him for his consideration, even went so far as to say, she was glad to think her nephew had a friend so prudent, and so worthy of being trusted. Nor did Miss Jane less successfully play her part. The tact which the Philipsons all possessed enabled her, with little trouble, to discover Mrs Dare's weak side, and to it she applied herself, flattering her on her position in society, and her taste in dress, until Mrs Dare began to feel a regard for the young person who had so much discernment in judging of her on so short acquaintance. Nor did Miss Philipson neglect to praise Albert, and this, even more than the rest, bore indubitably the stamp of being for an object; for she did not like him, and often treated him nearly as slightingly as she did myself; but she now asked if she were not to have the pleasure of seeing him that morning, he was such a nice boy; when occasionally he joined them in their walks, they found him quite a little companion. Albert came in while she was speaking, and when, having shaken hands with her, he turned to her brother, she said in an

audible whisper to me, "How handsome he is, and how like his mother."

I could not hope that Mrs Dare would be proof against all this; a cleverer woman than she might have been deceived by the specious appearance of these young people; and at the conclusion of the call she observed, "Christina has a party on her birthday."

"Oh, indeed," said Miss Philipson, innocently.

"Yes," continued Mrs Dare, "a few of her young friends. We shall be happy if you and your brother will come."

"It will give us the greatest pleasure; my younger sister also will value your kindness, I am sure."

Mrs Dare had perhaps not intended her invitation to be quite so comprehensive, or at all events would have preferred giving it herself, but she replied, "And your younger sister, we shall be happy to see her also."

When the Philipsons were gone, Christina asked her mamma what she thought of them.

"They are very nice young people, indeed," was the reply, "so well bred, and so sensible. I wonder they are not met more in society."

"Miss Philipson says that her mother has never recovered her spirits since she became a widow," observed Christina, "and that they don't like to leave her much."

"A very amiable feeling on both sides," said Mrs Dare.

After this, presuming on Mrs Dare's good nature and easiness of temper, the Philipsons became more than

ever encroaching; scarcely a day passed but some of them were at the Pines, and in every project which offered the least pleasure they seemed to consider themselves included. Mark had a desire to see Parramatta, and proposed that on the ensuing Saturday he, his cousins, and myself should make a trip thither. Mrs Dare consented, exacting but one condition, which was that we were not to go upon the water, and the promise to this effect was readily given. The plan happened to reach the ears of the Philipsons, who declared that their mother had been intending for some time to go to Parramatta, and they knew she would willingly let that day suit for her business, taking it as a matter of course that we would join parties. Christina was pleased, and the arrangements were therefore in common.

Now that I have proceeded a considerable length with this journal, I find that it wears a rather different aspect from what I anticipated. Many of the incidents, it is necessary to note, are, in themselves, so small, while unimportant as they detached appear, I cannot, reflecting on their consequences, and viewing them as the connecting links of the chain of destiny, regard them as trifling, though had I beforehand known how painful would be this task of writing, I never should have had courage to attempt it; so much reason do I find to condemn my own conduct as weak, and by my weakness sinful, during the whole time of my residence in my cousin's family.

To return to the Parramatta scheme. I was averse to the arrangement, and told Mark that I was sure his

aunt had not reckoned on his making a party when she gave her consent; but he, being in one of his petulant moods, silenced me with, "You must let us do our own way sometimes, Miss Norris; we can't be dictated to always."

Mrs Dare took no part, beyond enforcing her condition, and furnishing money for luncheon at a hotel; so the young people managed as they pleased.

The Philipsons appointed to meet us at a certain part of the road, and there, when we all alighted, for no good reason that I could see, but they seemed to think it necessary, Mrs Philipson, of whose dislike to a hired conveyance her daughter Jane had informed us, with the utmost coolness, stepped into Mr Dare's carriage, leaving Mark, who approved of the exchange, to occupy her place in the other.

Until this day I could not say that I had any acquaintance with Mrs Philipson; for though I had been in her company several times before, on each of these occasions there had been many to divide her attention. During this long drive, however, I expected to have an opportunity to judge whether she was a woman whom the errors of her children would distress. I cannot say much for her conversation, yet there was through it a tone which convinced me that she was a very clever person. There was a strength and originality in all her views, and this was the more striking, as I soon found that she possessed little education. Once I saw a faint flush come over her face when she discovered herself guilty of a rather egregious blunder in geography, but

she had admirable tact in changing the conversation, whenever it even verged towards subjects of which she was not mistress. Her manners were exceedingly gentle, at the same time distinguished by a decision which renders the word soft inapplicable. Unlike her children, she was towards me courteous and agreeable, while on Christina, who was for long almost sulky at being separated from all her companions, she bestowed a great deal of flattery to bring her into good humour.

Of her relations in England she spoke much, giving me to understand that she was the sister of a baronet, and otherwise very well connected. She also favoured us with many anecdotes of a certain Honourable Mrs Torington, a lady with whose name we were already familiar; so frequently was it in the mouth of Miss Jane, that we were rather tired of hearing it.

Our carriage was the first to reach Parramatta, and as we were to take a walk before luncheon, it was voted that refreshments should be ordered to be ready by our return.

"I daresay you are not much of a housekeeper, Christina, dear," said Mrs Philipson; "shall I save you the trouble of arranging with the waiter?"

"Oh, it is as much your party as ours," was the reply. "You had better give the order."

"What would you like, love?" asked Mrs Philipson, with that sweet smile I was learning to distrust; not that in the present instance it excited in me any particular suspicion, for in so simple a matter as the arrangement of a luncheon it was difficult to imagine what manœuvre she could have in view.

"Oh, I shall like anything," replied Miss Dare, "I am getting so hungry."

"And have you no preference in wine, dear?"

"We shall not require any wine, shall we?" said Christina; "let us have gingerbeer and plenty of oranges."

"Oh, I think we should have a glass of wine," suggested Mrs Philipson, "after the exercise we are going to take."

She finally gave what orders she pleased, and had just concluded when the rest of the party arrived, in high spirits, and having been, I have reason to believe, somewhat noisy on the road. We then set out in quest of amusement, though before we left the hotel there were some words between Mr Philipson and his mother, in consequence of his having done, or not done, I am not sure which, something contrary to her wishes. I was struck with the very authoritative tone she took in reproving him, as well as by his submission, for promising to be more careful and not disobey her again, he did not so much as mutter a rebellious expression. It puzzled me to think what enabled her to exercise so determined a rule over one who appeared so unruly, and I perceived that her authority was no less acknowledged by her daughters; her will to them all was a law, which not even Jane or Augustus, perverse and obstinate as in other cases they showed themselves, chose to dispute.

At Parramatta there is really nothing worth seeing, except the very painful sight of the female penitentiary,

a large building where several hundred women are confined. The waiter informed us that many of the "gentry" liked to go through this establishment; but Mrs Philipson cut short Christina's half-expressed wish to that effect, saying very decidedly—

"Horrid place! We will not go near it."

It would, indeed, be a sight less interesting than revolting, and we passed our time more pleasantly wandering amid the shades of the domain, which surrounds Government House, the country residence of the Governor that is, though I believe it is seldom used; and I had the pleasure of seeing, for the first time, luxuriant orange-trees, loaded with their golden fruit.

In spite of what we had heard of Mrs Philipson's retiring character, she evidently possessed some taste for show and luxury, for the luncheon she had ordered, including sundry delicacies of the season, was more costly than the occasion at all called for, nor was the glass of wine she had bespoke by any means limited to a single glass. Everything was, however, excellent, and our appetites being sharpened by exercise and novelty, ample justice was done to it, not least, though in a quiet ladylike way, by Mrs Philipson herself.

As I was not likely to be soon again in Parramatta, I had resolved to take advantage of the opportunity to call on Mrs K——, the wife of a clergyman who had shown some kindness to my brother, and as soon as luncheon was over, mentioning my intention, I inquired of the waiter if the house was within an easy distance. I could have no difficulty in finding it, I was told, but

it was some way off, and not much liking to walk alone in a strange place, I asked Miss Dare, who had been expressing a wish to go out again, to accompany me.

"Oh, dear, no," she replied, "I wanted to walk, but not to call on people I never saw before."

"One of my daughters will go with you, Miss Norris," said Mrs Philipson; "Jane will be happy, I am sure."

"I would," said Jane, "but I feel rather fatigued, mamma."

I would much have preferred walking alone than in company with Miss Jane, but her mother repeated, "A walk will do you good, I request you will go;" and she rose, so I was obliged to appear grateful.

But I was no more a favourite with her than she was with me. She had complied reluctantly, and took care I should see that in obliging me she was doing what she considered a penance. She did not once voluntarily address me, until we drew near the end of our walk, when she asked whether Mrs K—— moved in good society.

"In the best the place affords," I replied; "and she is a rather highly connected person."

Miss Jane's countenance changed; she was more agreeable, and she looked almost disappointed when we heard that Mrs K—— was not at home.

Philipson and Mark were standing at the bar when we again reached the hotel, in very angry dispute; from the few words I caught in passing I gathered that the former was insisting on having a black bottle he held in his hand filled with brandy, to which Mark, who was aware

of his propensity, violently objected. The remainder of the party were in the parlour, Mrs Philipson reposing on a sofa, and the girls and Albert also resting. They were then quiet enough, but the time of my absence had not elapsed without a piece of mischief being hatched, and with consternation I learned that it was settled to go home by water. The plan, I believe, originated in Mark's declaring that he would not again drive in the hackney-coach, the horses were so bad, and Philipson proposed to hire a boat, saying that the rowing would be fun. The idea was pleasing to both Christina and her cousin, and it was in vain I reminded them of their promise; they both protested they had not promised, in short, they were determined on taking their own way. I spoke aside to Christina, entreating her for once to follow advice, but she was perfectly impenetrable, and I turned to Mark, and begged him, if he had no regard for his own promise, to consider in what he was involving me.

"In what am I involving you?" he asked.

"You are obliging me either to break my promise to Mrs Dare, or to desert my charge; Christina will go if you do."

"You must please yourself, Miss Norris; we shall certainly go; but do exactly as you think best."

Meanwhile the bill had been ordered, and Mrs Philipson having stepped into a bed-room to make some little alteration on her dress, the account was handed to Christina. It was higher than she had expected, and she asked Mark to lend her some money; he produced

what was required, and Mr Philipson observed, "They know how to charge in this house, at all events; I had rather you pay that than I, Dare." It passed through my mind, Does he mean that the Dares are to be at the whole expense of the luncheon? but the doubt was not long of being solved, for Mrs Philipson, as soon as the waiter had withdrawn, glided from the adjoining apartment, and addressing Christina with the sweetest smile, said, "We have to thank you, Miss Dare, for a very pleasant day's entertainment, and for a most excellent luncheon."

Both Christina and Mark laughed slightly, and there was no more about it, though I was struck, I cannot say startled, with this fresh meanness in our acquaintances; it was not the money I regarded, for I knew the extra expense would scarcely signify to Christina, but I thought how almost every hour added some new proof to those we had already received that they were not fit associates for her.

I was roused from my painful reverie by a general move, which reminded me of the perplexity into which the boating mania of my wilful companions plunged me. I was sadly puzzled as to what was my duty, but determined that, as they were so headstrong, I had better accompany them than let them go alone on the river, and with a heavy heart I took a seat in the boat they hired. Albert said he would not break his promise, and in spite of the persuasions, and even taunts of his sister, who told him he was frightened at the water, persisted in going home with Mrs Philipson in his

mamma's carriage. Jane, who was past the age to care for the frolics which afforded the others amusement, took the same resolution, so that the boating party consisted of Mark and Miss Dare, Philipson, Annette, and myself. In addition to my other sources of anxiety, was a horror I had never been able to overcome of the water; but soon I found that this apprehension was needless, for Mr Philipson was expert in the use of the oar, and the boatman a steady, prudent person. For some time we proceeded peaceably, Philipson being engaged rowing, Mark conversing with the boatman, and the two young ladies chatting in under tones, while I, (as under circumstances was what alone I could desire,) entirely unnoticed, had leisure for reflection. The first interruption was on Philipson's complaining that rowing was hard work, and he must refresh himself, and resting his oar, he put his hand into the pocket of the jacket he had taken off, and drew from thence a black bottle, which Mark no sooner saw, than jumping up, he exclaimed, "By Jove! that's too bad, what's become of your promise?"

"Promises are made to be broken, as no one knows better than yourself," replied Mr Philipson, holding the bottle out of Mark's reach. "Sit down, do, or you 'll upset the boat."

Nothing, indeed, seemed more likely, for his movement caused it to rock so violently that the water came over one side, wetting the girls' dresses. But Mark, quite regardless of the risk, caught hold of the bottle, and struggled to get possession.

"Don't make an ass of yourself, Dare; sit down, I say," cried Philipson.

He pushed Mark back into his seat, but in the contention the latter succeeded in flinging overboard the object of dispute; the boat at the same moment was all but upset. Annette and I screamed, Christina turned pale, and Mr Philipson, thrown off his guard, and exasperated by the loss of his bottle, uttered an oath which perfectly terrified me, and seemed to awe even the boatman.

"For God's sake, Mr Philipson, don't swear so; you will bring down a judgment upon us," said he.

Philipson turned upon the man abruptly, "How do you know my name?"

"Ah, I knows you well enough, sir, as well as the young miss there," and he glanced, with considerable impudence in his manner, towards Annette. I might not have thought from this anything more than that the boatman was a saucy fellow, whom it would be as well to have nothing to do with, had I not been struck with the sudden change which came over Philipson's face. He returned, however, no answer, and there was a few minutes' silence, after which he observed, "You pull a very good oar, if you continue to row as well all the way, I 'll give you five shillings extra." Mark Dare looked up sharply, and muttered, "Eh! Master Philipson, that rather looks like a hint to him to hold his tongue." He then said aloud, "Where did you ever see this young gentleman before?"

"Oh, him and me is old acquaintances," replied the

man. "I have seen his father, too; he knows where, he is a very nice *gentleman* also."

Philipson's face flushed scarlet, as he vociferated, "Hold your jaw, fellow, and mind your work, or by —— not a rap shall you see from me when we get on shore."

The man did not seem at all alarmed by the threat, but he was silent, preserving, however, for some minutes a very knowing look. Philipson offered some remarks on the mangrove trees on the banks of the river, drawing our attention to them, and addressing me with a politeness I had never received from him since the first day of our acquaintance, proceeded to compare the trees and scenery of Australia with those of other countries he had visited, in a way that would have been really interesting had the purport for which it was done been less manifest. His object was gained, the attention of the party diverted, and the incident was soon apparently by all forgotten.

By and by we came to an orange grove, the sight of which suggested how refreshing some fruit would be, and Mark proposed to land and purchase a supply.

"We must go on a bit farther," said the boatman, "that's a private grove, and they don't sell."

"And do you think we can't help ourselves," said Philipson, laughing; "what is to hinder us, if we want them?"

"Well, I don't know how a *gentleman* may feel, but I should be sorry to get myself into such a scrape," observed the boatman.

Philipson's brow darkened, though he took no notice, and turning to Mark, he said, "Are you game, Dare, to go on shore and get some? I can't leave the boat."

This excuse for putting Mark forward in an exploit in which he had no inclination to appear himself, I quite saw through; Mark did not, although he hesitated. The boat was by this time within a very short distance of the land.

"Well, you are not up to it, are you, Mark?" said Philipson, which observation, he well knew, would excite him to stifle the small voice of conscience; and he was right. Mark's praiseworthy scruples were in an instant over-ruled, and to prove that he was *game* for anything he leaped to shore. Christina said she would go also, and fill her bag. I caught hold of her dress, and entreated her to consider, but she merely laughed, and tumbling some biscuits which were in her bag into the sea, pulled her dress away from me. In gaining the shore she missed the bank, and jumped right into the water nearly up to her knees; but she was quite too independent to regard that of any consequence, and ran after her cousin. There was a thick hedge, with a ditch on the farther side, to be got over, but the former they soon scrambled through, and being both light and very active, with a bound cleared the latter. Their proceedings we could see from the boat. Mark shook the branches, and Christina filled her bag and handkerchief. Suddenly a third person appeared in the field, and the trespassers made the best of their way towards the boat. Christina was allowed to escape, but her cousin was

pursued, and in his flight his hat blew off; he could not stop to recover it, and the man picked it up.

"I have you, at any rate," he shouted, as he read the owner's name in it—'Mr Mark Dare!'"

They reached the boat in the utmost disorder, and, considerably alarmed, united in reproaching Mr Philipson; but he applauded their spirit, and contrived to dissipate their fears, which were lest their robbery should reach the ears of Mr Dare.

It was a very hot day, and Mark felt the loss of his hat; he tied a handkerchief over his head, but the sun beat through it, and he began to complain of the heat.

"One of you young ladies," said he, "who have got both bonnets and parasols, should lend me one or other. Annette, give me your bonnet, I want you to see how well I shall look in it."

Annette laughingly refused, and a romping struggle ensued between this young lady and gentleman, in which Mark got possession of the bonnet, and putting it on, turned round his face to be admired.

"I don't know what you look like, Mark," said Christina.

"You make a horrid ugly girl," said Philipson.

"I don't at all agree with you," observed Annette; "if Dare had some dark curls under the bonnet he would be a very handsome girl."

"So I would, you are quite right, Annette," replied Mark, as he returned her the bonnet; "I am certain I could pass myself off in disguise. I say, Philipson,

what will you bet that I don't some day call upon you in woman's clothes, and take you all in?"

"You 'll call, I daresay. I'd wager in favour of your doing anything that's disreputable; but as for taking us in, we are not quite so green."

"But will you bet?" said Mark. "Mind I shan't come to-morrow or next day, but when I do, I 'll be bound I 'll impose on you all, your mother into the bargain."

Philipson shook his head in a manner that seemed to say, his mother was the last person to be taken in, and he replied, "I 'll lay you five shillings, if you like."

"Very well, done."

"Done," repeated the other; "and now you lose equally if you don't come."

"Humph! I did not mean that exactly. I never met with such a sharper as you are, Philipson. My word, it wasn't for nothing you came out here. I believe you got a free passage for some of your tricks; did he not, Christina?"

"He, or some of his ancestors," replied Christina.

These remarks, though only in their usual jesting tone, drew forth a most ill-tempered retort from Philipson, "Neither myself nor my ancestors, Miss Christina."

I am almost surprised that my memory enables me to note such conversation, but every incident of this most unpleasant day, together with the painful feelings which accompanied them, return upon me with a clearness

which could not be exceeded had they occurred only yesterday; and long past as they are, I find the recollection too much; my head begins to feel confused, and to ache—I shall, therefore, here conclude my chapter.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY.

WE reached home all a good deal fatigued, and Mark, after refreshing himself with some water-melon, threw himself into a chair in the schoolroom, and remained for some time in a grave, silent mood.

"After all," said he at last, "I am not sure that the acquaintance of these people is worth the vexation they cause us; their meanness is abominable, and there is evidently some story about old Philipson. I should not wonder if something very blackguard comes out; then their concealments! We must not speak to my aunt of having been on the water. If she asks any questions we must tell a lie, and I shall hate and despise myself for it."

I sighed to think how evanescent these good feelings were likely to be, but I refrained from making any comment, knowing that often, when most anxious to do good, I had done harm by speaking. There was, however, one thing I saw with pleasure, and this was, that his conscience was more alive to the sin of falsehood; he

could not now tell a lie without experiencing at least shame and self-reproach.

Christina's eagerly-looked-for birthday dawned, and with the evening came the expected guests. Tea and coffee having been partaken of, the Shrove-tide games were introduced. Over these I was called upon to preside, and many a brilliant destiny did I read, in my character of prophetess, to the youthful party. The varied appearance that most of the glasses presented, allowed me to give such explanations as I thought would be liked; but when Christina's turn came, I could make nothing of what was in her tumbler; it presented a dull surface without any objects, save one very small spot. After a close examination I said, "You are destined to marry a sailor, Miss Dare; this is the sea, and that is his ship."

"Let me look," exclaimed Mark; "Miss Norris, you don't know how to read fortunes. Christina, that is Stanley Downs, and there is a bush hut; you are to live in the bush."

"No, no," replied Christina, "I won't have that interpretation, I liked Miss Norris's much better."

She seemed more vexed by her cousin's words than was worth while; so, to divert her attention, I said, "Now, shall we try Mr Mark's."

Mark had found himself possessor of the wedding-ring in the trial of brose which just preceded, and being assured that he would be certainly married within the year, was very merry over his own prospects, but he looked as grave as Christina over his present fortune.

It was very similar, except that there were more objects on what, following his clue, I decided to be Stanley Downs. These I said were flocks and herds, and prognosticated for him also a bush life. Neither appeared pleased with the prophecy; they wanted something novel and exciting, and all the others having been more or less brilliantly provided for, they regarded the change of fortune in their own cases as a sort of doom; aware as they were that it was but folly, a damp was thrown over their spirits, and I welcomed the appearance of the fritters. This last part of the ceremony was soon despatched, for before the plate had gone quite round, Albert held up the sixpence. It was pronounced that he was to be the wealthiest of the party, and Mrs Dare observed, "I think it very likely he will be rich, richer than you at any rate, Mark, for I am sure you will throw away all your good fortune." How little did she know how true her words were to come!

A considerable time was thus spent, everybody being amused, with the exception of Mr and Miss Philipson; the politeness of the latter prevented her showing very plainly how little she was interested, though her brother said it was play only fit for children, and he tried to withdraw Sir Laurence Delafield, with whom he had before picked up an accidental acquaintance, from the rest of the company. But Sir Laurence was standing beside Annette, who, more simple, did not despise the amusement, and helping her to make out her future fate, in which I heard him whispering something about a wedding-ring and a long voyage, was satisfied to remain where he was.

Philipson became restless, and as was his invariable custom, gave vent to his ill-humour in muttered oaths, sufficiently loud to reach the ears of those for whom they were not intended. The Miss Hills were visibly shocked, and Fanny, whose wish of doing right was perhaps stronger than her judgment, took upon herself to reprove him, saying, gravely, how wrong such language was, and that considering how narrow an escape he had very lately, it was shocking to see him so careless.

"What narrow escape have I had?" asked Philipson, as the eyes of several persons were directed towards him, for no one knew to what she alluded.

"Why, is it not only two days since, when you were profaning the Sabbath by fishing during the time of service, that your boat was all but upset in a brick-fielder?"

"Me out fishing during service!" repeated Philipson; "that, I will take my oath, I was not; who told you?"

"No one told us," replied Fanny, "we saw you; we were looking out for papa, who has to cross the water every Sunday afternoon to preach at St John's, and there could be no mistake."

"But there was some mistake," interrupted Philipson, doggedly, "for I tell you that I was on board the *Sea Serpent* the whole of Sunday afternoon, and heard service read there."

Fanny coloured and bit her lip, and made no reply, but Louisa, who had at first seemed rather annoyed to see her sister take a stranger to task, looked at him in-

tently a moment, and then said to Mark, "But what is Mr Philipson thinking of?"

"Thinking of? what he is talking of, I suppose."

"Because," resumed Miss Hill, "we saw him as distinctly as we see him now, and papa, who was crossing from Sydney, did so also; we knew him by that scar on his face, and papa said he thought he had been fighting. When a person has done wrong a falsehood can only make it worse."

"Oh, I suppose he denied it, because he thought you and your sister are so good you would not like him for going out fishing on a Sunday."

"It is no concern of ours what he does," replied Louisa; "we don't know him, we never met him in company before; but can you, knowing he tells falsehoods, associate with him?"

"Oh, we like him for other things," answered Mark; and as Louisa did not seem to feel the force of this argument, he added, "It is very easy to judge for another; but suppose the case your own, would you give up a companion, a young lady for instance, because she did not always speak the truth?"

"I hope I would," said Louisa; "I would not willingly be intimate with a person who did not speak the truth."

"But some people who are not very bad change things very much in speaking from what they are, don't you think so?"

"I am afraid not," answered Louisa.

"Suppose you heard that I told falsehoods," said

Mark, recollecting his lie to Mr Hill; "have you never heard of any I told?"

"No, certainly, I never heard of any, and I do not think any could be brought up against you; you are too frank and too fearless, I am sure, to tell falsehoods, or rather, I should say, too well principled."

"Never mind the principles," said Mark, "but tell me why you said too fearless?"

"Because, is not falsehood the resource of cowardice?" replied Louisa; "it is a dread of the consequences which makes any one shrink from speaking the truth."

This had never before struck Mark. Louisa had shown him the subject in a new and forcible light, he felt also that he owed some gratitude to Mr Hill for not having exposed his faults to his family. A summons to the card-table interrupted the conversation. The Miss Hills declined playing, though, as Mrs Dare just then requested them to sing a new duet, Christina had no hesitation about leaving them.

Philipson brightened up as soon as cards were produced, and before almost anybody else was seated he took possession of a chair next his sister Jane. As the rest placed themselves round the table, Mark asked him to change his seat, saying that he wanted to sit by Jane; but Philipson declined moving.

"Well, then, Jane, you come to the other side of the table with me," said Mark.

"No, I won't sit beside you, Dare, because you behaved so ill when I was sitting beside you before tea," was Miss Jane's reply.

"Please yourself, then, I'll go and sit beside Miss Lyall; you will be my partner, won't you, Emily?"

Christina proposed to play for sixpence a dozen, but against this Mr Philipson protested.

"Not quite so low, Miss Dare, a shilling a dozen."

"No, no, Mr Philipson," replied Christina, "sixpence a dozen is enough."

"But there will be no interest in such a game. won't play unless you make it a shilling a dozen."

"Very well, then you need not play," replied Christina, quietly; "sixpence a dozen we shall play for."

They played a round or two at this rate, but Philipson was very sulky, and declared that he would prefer sitting out. He left the table, to the annoyance of both Mark and Christina, who were jointly doing the honours, and could not allow a guest to feel cut out. He sat apart a few minutes, and Mark then went to him, and tried to restore his good humour.

"What possible pleasure can I find in such play as this?" said Philipson. "It is well enough for Albert and Frank Hill, but you should remember we are not all children."

"But some of them I know can't afford to lose much," replied Mark.

"Then, if they can't afford to play, why did you ask them?"

"But they are asked; now don't be cross, there is a good fellow, you will spoil the whole evening."

"Then will you play for a shilling a dozen?" persisted Philipson.

"Well, well, we will, if Christina has no objection;" and Philipson allowed himself to be led back to the table. "I'll have my old place," said he, springing over the back of the chair he had vacated, and Mark proposed to play as he wished.

Christina had no choice but to consent, and giving a handful of her own counters to a little boy and girl, who she thought were not furnished with many shillings, they continued.

As the game proceeded, they became very riotous, and, among the younger ones, there was a good deal of squabbling. Sir Lawrence Delafield kept his seat next Annette, and though no less insipid than herself, paid her certainly attention. Pleased and flattered she looked even prettier than usual, and preserved towards him the good breeding she was too much inclined in familiar intercourse to lay aside. In her languid way, Mrs Dare, although polite, had hitherto given little attention to any one in particular; but when the noise in the room became too great for the music to continue, she entered into conversation with Miss Hill, in which Louisa contrived to be so agreeable that Mrs Dare said to her, "How I wish, Miss Hill, you lived a little nearer us, and that you were Christina's companion, instead of some she has a great fancy for at present." Miss Hill must have remembered that Mrs Dare had herself discouraged the acquaintance, but she was too well-mannered and good-natured to seem to do so, and she replied, "We should be so glad if Miss Dare would come to see us."

"Well," said Mrs Dare, "if you can settle with Christina, I am sure I shall be very happy."

Louisa Hill had not the habit some young people acquire of making engagements without reference to her parents, and she glanced appealingly at her father, who smiled and nodded, then she named a day, and asked if Mrs Dare would have any objection to her daughter spending it with them.

"I can have no objection," replied Mrs Dare; "and Christina will, I am sure, be delighted."

This was just settled, and Mark and I were included in the invitation, when a confusion of voices, not the most good-humoured, burst upon our ears from the card table, and immediately succeeded the following remarks:—"Really it is too ridiculous, a natural *vingt'un* nearly every time," said Mr Philipson, in affected astonishment at his own success.

"I feel quite ashamed," was added, in the softer voice of Miss Jane; "we are carrying off all the money."

"Miss Norris," said Mrs Dare, beckoning to me, "do you think they have nearly done their game; they are quite too noisy?"

I did not know, but went to the table. At the moment I approached, there was a fresh deal, and Christina, whose turn it was, called to Albert to collect his counters, which were scattered all about.

"I 'll assist him," said Miss Philipson, by whom he was seated, and pushing the child's counters towards him, she adroitly swept the half of them into her own heap.

"Excuse me, Miss Philipson," said I, "but I think that, by accident, you have mixed some of Albert's counters with your own."

"I have done no such thing," exclaimed Miss Philipson, sharply, but the words were scarcely uttered than from the force of habit she corrected herself, "Excuse me, Miss Norris, but I think you are mistaken."

Although I had never been in the way of playing cards myself, I had occasionally before looked on while others were so engaged, and watching this game I detected sundry artifices between Mr Philipson and Miss Jane, which explained the reason of their wishing to sit together. That deal was the last; but before the party broke up, Miss Lyall, who had been banking with Mark, said, in a loud laughing whisper, "But we can't keep it; what shall we do with it?" and he called out, "Here are six shillings of conscience-money; we have been cheating you, poor, blind creatures, but our consciences are too tender to let us keep it."

Philipson looked up angrily, "What a shame!"

"That is right, Mr Philipson," said Miss Lyall, "I admire that honest indignation; but I 'll tell you what to do, cut for it, and Mark and I will sit out as a penalty for our misdeeds."

Just then a footman entered, saying, there was a man below who wished to see Mr Mark Dare.

"Me," said Mark; "what an odd time to come at. Who can he be? Can't he wait till to-morrow?"

"He asked particular to see you to-night, sir," was the reply, and Mark left the room. He was absent some

minutes, and when he returned, consternation was written in his face. He signed to his cousin, who instantly quitted the table, and they whispered apart together.

Seeing curious glances cast towards them by several of the guests, I ventured to go to them, and say, "Mr Mark, are you aware that it has a very odd appearance you and Christina whispering thus together?"

"Oh, Miss Norris," said Christina, "we are in such a scrape! The gardener from the orange-grove at Parramatta has come with Mark's hat; he asked for papa, and vows that he will inform against us as soon as he comes back. We must bribe him to hold his tongue, only we have both been so unlucky at cards that we have scarcely any money."

"I have half-a-crown," said Mark; "but that is not enough."

Much as I blamed them, I could not wish them to come to such disgrace as a disclosure to Mr Dare implied. I happened to have half-a-sovereign in my pocket, and making no comment, I put it into his hand, saying, "Don't be offended, you can pay me when you like."

"Thanks; twelve-and-sixpence, and these three shillings of yours, Christina, will it be enough?"

Just then Albert approached, jingling some money in his hands. "I have won the conscience-money," said he; "and now we are going to supper."

"Will you lend me that?" said Mark, quickly; "I will pay you as soon as I can."

"Oh, if you wish for it, I will give it you," replied Albert; "I have no use for it—I have got everything I want just now."

"No, no, the money is your own," said Mark, "but lend it to me for the present; and, Christina, see if you can keep them all here for a few minutes till I have sent him away; he is in the hall, I gave him a glass of wine to keep him quiet."

Mark ran out, and Christina, returning to the company, contrived to engage them in a game of forfeits, and when we presently went down to supper Mark met us at the dining-room door, and I saw by his face that he had managed successfully.

Having returned to the drawing-room, Mrs Dare asked for music, and claimed a promise of Mr Philipson's to sing. Philipson had really a good voice, and, (not to overlook any of his recommendations, as he had not many to spare,) understood how to make it tell in society. Miss Philipson was quite sure her brother would be happy to sing, but he was not to be seen.

"Where is Mr Philipson?" said Mrs Dare, looking round. One of the boys remarked he had been last visible standing at the sideboard, drinking negus.

"It is getting so late," pursued Mrs Dare, "there will be no time for his song. Mr Hill, you said you were going down-stairs to inquire for your carriage, pray see if he is in the dining-room, and bring him up."

Philipson was not in the dining-room, but Mr Hill heard voices near, and exploring a short passage, found himself in the pantry, where, seated on a table, in familiar

conversation with the footmen, smoking a cigar, and with a tumbler of spirits and water beside him, was Mr Philipson.

"Upon my word, young gentleman," said Mr Hill, sternly, "you are making yourself at home."

"To be sure, old fellow, I always make myself at home," rejoined Philipson, with a look of stupid mirth, which only gradually gave way to a glimmering notion that he had made a mistake; then he rose, "Oh! Mr Hill, sir, I beg pardon, I—I thought you were Mark."

"I was sent by Mrs Dare to request you to come to the drawing-room," said Mr Hill; "she wishes to hear you sing, although," he added, looking at him with disgust, "after all this smoking, I cannot give you an invitation to join ladies."

Philipson was very far from being in a condition to comply with Mrs Dare's request, and he knew it.

"I shall not go up-stairs again," said he; "I—shall —go—home; that must be our—carriage that drove up just now."

"No, sir, that was Mrs Lyall's carriage," said a footman.

"Oh! well—but I must go home—my sisters must—come down."

His voice was so much that of a drunken man's, and his clothes smelt so horribly of tobacco smoke, that Mr Hill, as he afterwards told me, was rather puzzled what to do; but before he had decided, while they were in the hall, Miss Philipson, who was on her way to the dining-room to look for her brother, appeared, and see-

ing in a moment how the case stood, affected alarm for his health.

"You are not well, Augustus! we had better go home; is our carriage come?"

"Your carriage has been come sometime, ma'am."

Mrs Dare was taking leave of Mrs Lyall when Miss Philipson returned with her brother's apology. He was not quite well, had been on duty all that morning, the sun had given him a severe headache, and he was really too indisposed to appear again; all these lies Mrs Dare swallowed, and Miss Philipson, her sister, and brother made their escape, without the latter coming to well-merited disgrace.

Before departing, Miss Hill spoke to Christina, and gave her an invitation, which Christina at once accepted, observing, "On Monday we shall have more opportunity to talk together than we have had to-night; but you know, with so many people one's time is taken up often by those one likes least."

CHAPTER XIII.

A BET WON.

ON the morning of this Ash-Wednesday, Christina and I were just laying aside our books, preparatory to getting ready for church, when Mark entered the school-room.

"It is too early to dress for church yet," said he; "you have just half-an-hour to chat with me."

"Well, what have you got to say, Mr Mark?"

"Oh! I want to talk about the party, and about the Parramatta business; do you think we shall hear anything more of that?"

"I think that such conversation is scarcely fit to begin Ash-Wednesday with," I replied; "we ought before going to church to turn our minds to serious subjects."

"That is just why I came here now; if you don't let me have my talk out I shall be thinking of these things all church time. You must remember that parties are more to me than to you, who have been used to them all your life."

There was some reason in this, and as he spoke so frankly, I thought it best to hear what he had to say.

"First, about the Parramatta business," said he; "we

got off there better than we had any right to expect, for the man was dreadfully obstinate, and said he must take care of his master's interest; but when I gave him the money he thought better of it, and said he did not wish to be ill-natured, or to get a young gentleman into a scrape, and he would take no more notice of it. So you see we are quite safe, Miss Norris, and 'all's well that ends well.'"

"You may think that all ends well, Mr Mark," I answered, very gravely, "and yet be accountable for a great deal."

"Accountable for what?" he asked. "I have just told you we have heard the end of it."

"Should this man," I said, "come to the gallows, you may be accountable; by your own statement, he was true to his master's interest until you bribed him, which temptation proved too powerful."

"Very true," replied Mark, "I offered him half-a-sovereign to hold his tongue, and he said he could not do it; then I showed him the rest of the money, and he did as I told you."

"Poor fellow," I could only say.

"Does that apply to him or to me?" asked Mark.

"To him, to be sure; from this we may infer that he really was an honest man, and did not wish to defraud his master, but you have given him a strong lesson, and it is only the first step that is the difficulty, the downward road is always easy."

"But, Miss Norris, you lent us some of the money yourself."

"I did not then understand, Christina, that he was a servant. I supposed him to be the owner of the grove, and that he came to demand compensation for the injury you had done, in which case it would have been right to pay him handsomely, as the only atonement you could make. Had I known that you were bribing him to deceive his employer, and conceal your faults, I certainly should not have contributed."

Both looked serious, and it was some minutes before the conversation was resumed, by Christina making an effort to change the subject.

"Well, tell me, Mark, how did you and Miss Lyall get on?"

"Oh, very well. You know I have known her always; and really she would be a nice girl if she were a little polished up."

"That is a new idea, is it not, that she wants polishing up?" said his cousin.

"Rather, perhaps; I always thought Jack a very good fellow, but I think now she is a little in the rough; she is not so refined as the Miss Philipsons, or Louisa Hill, to say nothing of anybody else, Christina."

"Louisa has very good manners," said Christina, with a complacent smile, "and the Philipsons are ladylike at times when they are on their good behaviour, but they are so inconsistent; when they are quite at ease they are different from when they are in company; sometimes they say and do things which make me almost think they cannot have been accustomed to quite as good society

as they would have us believe; have you ever thought so, Miss Norris?"

"I have thought so very often," I answered.

"But last night, you must allow, they were on their best behaviour," said Mark; "and it was handsome of them to be so, for they were a good deal thrown out from knowing so few people; no one took much to them except Sir Lawrence Delafield, and he seemed rather smitten with Annette."

"I think they intend to push that acquaintance," observed Christina, "for I heard Miss Philipson tell him that her mother used to meet his father at Mrs Torington's, and that they would be so glad if he would go to see them."

"Forward enough," said I.

"Philipson was out of humour last night," remarked Christina, "and I am sure he had no reason, for he went away with his pockets well lined; it is most extraordinary how he always wins at cards."

"It may be very unjust," said Mark, "but I can't help thinking he does not always play fair; it struck me last night that he did not come honestly by those natural *vingt'uns*, only I don't know how he could have cheated."

"I observed"—— I began, and then stopped.

"What did you observe?" inquired Mark.

"I hesitated, because I know so little of cards that I may have imagined an unfairness where there was none, but is it allowable to change cards?"

"To change cards with another person?" they exclaimed; "no, I should think not."

"So I thought, but Mr and Miss Philipson did so frequently. Mrs Dare requested me to see if your game was nearly finished, and I stood by the table, you may remember, behind Albert's chair, so that I could see what cards they both held. He, I remarked, had a king, and his sister an ace, which he took from her, in exchange for some other card, then he threw them on to the table, and said he had a natural *vingt'un*."

Mark looked horror-struck, as did Christina also, and she said, "So that accounts for their choosing to sit together."

"But are you quite sure, Miss Norris?" said Mark, after a pause, in which he seemed casting about for some excuse for them; "are you not confusing with that round of gregory ease, when we all changed cards?"

"No, I am certainly making no mistake; I wish I could think I were."

"Oh! I believe it," said Christina, "though I am surprised they should do it at that moment, for the deal before he had a *vingt'un*, and as he and Jane had had a great many they began to excite suspicion, so he might have expected all eyes to be upon him; and I did look, but saw nothing."

"You stooped to pick up your handkerchief," I said, "they changed then; I saw them do the same several times afterwards."

My pupils both were much shocked.

"How sorry I am," said Mark, "that I cheated even in jest; but neither Miss Lyall nor I for a moment thought of keeping the money we won unfairly.

"No one would suspect you, Mr Mark," I said; "but does not this show you how careful you ought to be in the choice of acquaintance?"

"And in the choice of amusements," added Christina. "How I wish we had followed your advice, and had dancing, anything but cards."

"As a general rule, I think anything is better, but in this particular case I can scarcely be sorry you did not follow my advice. These young people would have been equally bad though they had not had it in their power to give you so incontestable a proof of their want of principle, and distressing as is the discovery, if it have the effect of opening your eyes, far from regretting, I must rejoice that it has taken place."

"Oh, as for my eyes being opened," said Christina, "I have had doubts of the Philipsons for long. I believe them to be entirely without principle, and to have very little right feeling; they are always manœuvring to obtain some petty good to themselves."

"If you think so, which I had no idea you did, why, let me ask, do you not give up the acquaintance?"

"That is a more serious consideration," said Mark.

"Yes, we should really lose a great deal of amusement," added Christina, "and for mere companions, I don't see that it signifies what their characters are; we are not made better or worse by them."

"Can you assert that, Miss Christina, and the affair of the orange-grove so recent? You would never have engaged in it but for your companions; and how much in the Bible is there to warn us against bad company."

My words appeared to have effect—both were silent a moment; Christina then said, "Well, Miss Norris, you know we cannot break with them all at once, but we will see less of them." Mark was likewise about to speak, but we were interrupted by the entrance of Albert.

"Not ready for church! The carriage is come round, and mamma is waiting."

"I am ready," replied Mark, taking his prayer-book from the table.

"And I shall be ready in two minutes," said Christina, as she ran out of the room, while I following, thought that this conversation, should it be the means of giving them clearer views of their duty, or rather of animating them to its performance, I could not regard as an unfit preparation for going to church.

And for a time it had good effects. On their minds all impressions, although evanescent, were, while they lasted, vivid, and though they had more than usual temptations, Mark, having a week's holiday, no proposal was made of meeting the Philipsons. They were, however, dissatisfied without the excitement their society afforded, and the very fact of how necessary it had become, they ought to have felt as an additional reason for breaking through the habit. They were restless, evidently indulging wishes for forbidden pleasure; and on the last day of the week, at the hour on which we always walked out, they did not make their appearance. I inquired of the servants if they had been seen, but none knew anything of them; nowhere were they to be found, and recollecting that they had complained of the morn-

ing being dull, I was forced to suppose they had gone for variety to the Philipsons. Having taken up this idea, I determined to go to the house, and accordingly set forth, not doubting of finding them there.

It was not a day for any one to go out for pleasure, there being a hot wind, and no sooner did I open the hall door than a blast as from a furnace met me. As I walked down the avenue, I was struck with the scorched and drooping appearance of the plants in the parterres; leaves and flowers, which a few hours before had been fresh and beautiful, were now shrivelled as though they had been subjected to some artificial heat. Nor was I unconscious of the effect on myself. I felt the skin of my face becoming parched, while even the light clothing I wore seemed a weight and an oppression. The thermometer must at this time have been upwards of 100° in the shade, and not a cloud tempered the sun's rays, though the sky was not of a brilliant blue, but was dimmed by that faint grayish haze usually seen during the hottest phase of the Australian climate, and which I had learned to regard as the very embodiment of heat. I knew, however, that a very short space of time might change all this; I knew that a strong wind from the south might suddenly set in, and while it lowered the thermometer 20° at once, drive before it clouds of red dust that would quickly envelop every object with which it came in contact. Woe to the individual who is caught in the brickfielder! His clothes will scarcely be fit to go on again. Alas for the lady, whose handsome furniture may be in a moment spoiled, if her domestics neglect

to close every window and aperture before the dust storm sets in! These rapid changes of temperature must be, I think, very trying. The country is generally called extremely healthy, and I have heard it maintained, that from the dryness of the air even the intense heat which prevails great part of the year has not the same wasting effect on a constitution as the moist heat of other sultry climates. Disease certainly is rare, and many of the common European epidemics are scarcely known; still, my own observation goes to prove that the climate *is* wasting, and few Englishmen, after a residence here of some years, but are the better of being freshened up by at least a visit "home."

For nothing less than the object I had in view would I have persevered in my walk; but so anxious was I, that I struggled on, gasping in vain for a breath of air, until I reached Mrs Philipson's cottage. The door was opened by the lady herself.

"Oh, Miss Norris," said she, "how do you do? I thought it was Jane; she went out to walk with Augustus an hour ago, and it looks so like a brickfielder that I have been watching for her return quite with anxiety; but how tired you look, pray come in."

Without regarding her invitation, I inquired if Miss Dare and her cousin were in the house.

"No," replied Mrs Philipson; "we have seen nothing of them for several days."

I was startled, the more that it was against rule for Christina to walk beyond the grounds with only her cousin. Before, however, I could decide what to do, a

sudden faintness, the effect of exhaustion from walking through the hot wind, came over me, and for a moment I was scarcely conscious what passed, until I found myself seated on a chair in the comparatively cool and darkened vestibule, while Mrs Philipson, with real kindness of manner, was holding a glass of water to my lips. As soon as I was sufficiently recovered to speak, she suggested that my pupils had probably fallen in with her son and daughter, and proposed that I should wait a little while to see if they returned with them. The advice seemed good, and I followed her up-stairs.

In the drawing-room we found Sir Lawrence Delafield and Annette, playing battledore and shuttle-cock. They ceased on our entrance, and Annette seated herself demurely with a piece of work in her hand, while Sir Lawrence threw himself on to an ottoman beside her. Very politely Mrs Philipson spoke of the party to which the young people had been at the Pines a few nights previous. She understood, she said, that it was so remarkably agreeable, the only drawback to her girls' pleasure in the evening was the indisposition of poor Augustus; she trusted that no one had imputed it to anything but the heat of the weather.

Mr Hill had not then informed me of the *exposé*, and I did not know to what she alluded. I was sorry, I replied, that Mr Philipson had been unwell, but I had not heard of it. Mrs Philipson looked vexed with herself for referring to the subject, but before she had time to introduce another, a servant entered, saying that a lady

of the name of Gray wished to see Mrs Philipson to inquire the character of a servant.

"Show her up," said Mrs Philipson. "You will excuse me, Miss Norris, do you know any lady of this name in Sydney?"

"I never heard the name in Sydney, but I know very few people," I replied, just as the maid announced the visitor.

A tall, well-dressed, but rather odd-looking, woman entered, accompanied by a boy of about twelve years, who had a handkerchief tied over his eye on account of the blight, and apologised for keeping his hat on. He seated himself opposite to Annette, while his sister, for so she appeared, entered on the purport of her call. The usual inquiries were made, and replied to, and the ladies were thus engaged when Mr and Miss Philipson returned from their walk.

"My son and daughter," said Mrs Philipson, to the stranger, in a slight, though well-bred, way; then asked if they had seen anything of my pupils.

"No," replied Jane, "we have seen nothing of them."

"Miss Norris thought they were here," pursued her mother; "but there is no reason, I am sure, for her to be uneasy."

Mr Philipson happened to be standing near the boy to whom he addressed some commonplace remark, and received a very short answer. But shy, or gruff, as this boy was, Annette seemed to find in his appearance something more than ordinarily attractive; for from time

to time she cast shyly scrutinising glances at him, until Sir Lawrence whispered, "You appear to be quite caught by that youth, Annette."

"Oh, dear, no," said she giggling, and applying again to her work.

I was now sufficiently rested to resume my walk, and was anxious to return home, being really uncomfortable respecting my pupils, and at the moment I took leave, the stranger also rose. Mrs Philipson, whose policy it was to be all things to all men, had given this lady a most polite reception, and when she was about to retire, rang the bell herself, and glanced at her son, who opened the door, and offered his arm to conduct her down stairs. I paused on the landing-place an instant to let them go down first, and the drawing-room door being open, I heard Annette exclaim, "What a pretty boy! but, mother, who is he so like?"

"Is he like anybody we know?" replied Mrs Philipson; "it did not strike me, though his sister is a very strange person. I could not see her face, for she kept her veil pertinaciously down, but somehow she looked unlike other people."

Philipson was speaking to the lady, who had accepted his civility, but we had scarcely reached the bottom of the stairs, when suddenly drawing her arm from his, she leaned against the balustrade, and burst into a loud fit of laughter. Mr Philipson looked astonished, and seemed to think the lady must be mad; but the more puzzled he looked, the more her merriment increased, and as soon as she had a little recovered, before any

one had spoken, snatching off her bonnet and wig she stood revealed, Mark Dare.

"You are not green enough to be taken in, Philipson, eh?"

But Philipson did not look as if he altogether enjoyed the joke, he laughed, but constrainedly, and turning to the pretended boy, tossed his cap off on to the ground, saying, "A disguise here too, I suppose." The familiarity was called for, and even in the midst of my consternation I thought, to what do young ladies who choose to behave so unbecomingly expose themselves! Christina's curls fell round her face, and they all joined in a laugh, which, reaching the drawing-room, speedily brought Mrs Philipson, Annette, and Sir Lawrence to learn what was going on. Not having witnessed the metamorphosis, they were at first unable to comprehend, but when they understood, Annette laughed heartily, and her mother was, or pretended to be, much amused, and complimented her young friends on the success with which they had sustained their parts, in a way, I thought, extremely injudicious. In a very few minutes Mark turned to Philipson and claimed his bet.

"I have won it fairly, you must allow," said he, "so fork out."

But Philipson began to look very blank, and was evidently endeavouring to find some reason why he had not lost; but none occurring, he said, sulkily, "I have no money just now, you must wait."

"Or stay," said Mark, who was careless about money, and had an idea that his friend was very poor; "if you

will walk with us down the town, I will let you off paying; I did it only for the fun of the thing."

"Oh! I would walk with you," said Philipson, "only I must go on board immediately."

"But I will walk with you," exclaimed Annette, who had been speaking with Christina; "I'll put on some of Augustus's clothes, and be down again in a minute."

She was hastening away when her mother's peremptory "No, Annette," stopped her. Mrs Philipson would not suffer her daughter to accompany us in such disguise.

It often surprised me how little sense of propriety these young people possessed; though for anything so bold as this I had not been prepared. Where delicacy is not given by nature, it is extremely difficult to instil it; and when they proposed to exhibit themselves in the town, I was at a loss what to say, knowing that the arguments which would be all-powerful with most girls, would have no weight with Christina. It happened, however, that what I said this time had effect, and they consented to go quietly home. It was an hour that Wooloomooloo is very public, and terrified let we should be recognised by some acquaintance, I anxiously looked out for a fly, which we might hire to take us home. Fortunately, before long I saw one returning from a house where a gentleman had just alighted, and I said, "We will go home in that, Miss Dare; let me hold up my parasol to stop the man."

"No, no, Miss Norris," exclaimed Christina, "don't hold up your parasol; I must carry out my character;"

and jumping off the path, she shouted very loud to the driver, then when the carriage drew up, handed in her cousin and myself.

We gained admittance to the house by a private entrance through the garden, and reached our rooms without being seen. Christina and Mark hastened to divest themselves of their disguise, and both seemed glad to be safe from detection, though I took the opportunity to speak to them more seriously than I had almost ever before done. I was quite aware that Christina had meant no harm, but a disguise in masculine attire is always judged very hardly in the world, and at the risk of appearing harsh or unkind, I thought it right to use very strong arguments to show her how exceedingly bold and improper a thing she had done; nor was I sorry to perceive that, as I represented what might be the consequence of such imprudence, her usual volubility in self-defence forsook her, and she became rather frightened.

"As we went only to the Philipsons, it does not so much matter," said she, "and I am thankful that you happened to be calling; had we not met you we should certainly have gone through the town."

I was by no means sure that the Philipsons were safe confidants, and so I told her.

"But they did not see any harm in it," said she; "Mrs Philipson herself laughed, and thought it a good joke."

"She thought, or pretended to think so in your case," I replied, "but you saw that she would on no account

allow her own daughter to dress up. My dear, there is no use talking about it, by every person who knows anything of the world it must be condemned. I only wonder that your own feeling does not point that out to you."

"Then if they thought it wrong, the more secure we are that they will keep the secret."

"As long as they remain your friends, they probably will, but, if what I look upon as not unlikely, you have a quarrel with them, I would not answer for what they may not do; you confessed the other day that you suspected them to be devoid of principle."

"They certainly speak very maliciously of the Miss Brahams," said Christina, with a sigh, "and how intimate they were with them."

"That is just a proof of what I have been saying, and I earnestly pray, my dear Christina, that you may not have reason to rue the day in which you made this acquaintance. It may be superstition, but I cannot divest myself of the idea that it will be productive of evil."

Softened for once out of her usual careless bravado, and I think it was the only time my words had so powerful an effect, Christina shed tears, and quitted my room in a state of mingled apprehension and contrition.

To Mark I spoke differently; his fault had been far less. What in Christina was a breach of womanly modesty, was in him only a piece of folly, better let alone, but not seriously reprehensible. I believed, however, that she had been encouraged to it by him, and I said

that it was ungenerous to take advantage of his uncle's absence to instigate his cousin to conduct of which Mr Dare must disapprove. He took my remarks in very good part, for he was grieved to see his cousin afflicted; but the action, although they might regret it, could not now be recalled, nor could their promises for the future remove the weight of anxiety from my mind.

I had a letter partly written to Joseph, and when I sat down to finish it, although I had not hitherto informed him in more than a general way of my perplexities, I now sought relief for the feelings of my heart in writting an ample account of the trouble my pupils cost me, and asked his advice how to proceed. When, however, I came to read it over, it struck me as unkind towards them, and that, perhaps, if the excitement of my feelings had subsided, I should view the present matter differently; so, repenting of what I had done, I tore up my letter, and re-wrote it, merely saying that I was not quite so comfortable in my situation as I had been, that my pupils were very self-willed, and I was often embarrassed how to act. I could anticipate also what his advice would be, that he, or almost any other person to whom I applied, would say, "If you can't do the duties of the situation, you had better leave it."

The expediency of this step had several times lately occurred to me, but until the return of Mr Dare it was out of my power to do anything. As I sat that night in my room, I could not help thinking how completely I must have disappointed his expectations; how far short I had fallen of my own. I had commenced by

animadverting on the conduct of Miss Sharp, and by so doing, set myself up as her superior, yet even she had in reality fulfilled better the duties she had undertaken. I pictured to myself how she would have acted in similar circumstances, and had little doubt that, withheld by none of the scruples which oppressed me, she would on the first underhand deed, the first act of decided rebellion against her authority, have gone clearly and at once to Mr Dare, and thus have prevented all the evils of this intimacy. Very deeply I felt my own deficiency, but could only pray to be enabled to act for the future with greater decision.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NORTH SHORE.

I HAD a hope that our visit to the Hills might benefit Christina. She had often excused her follies by maintaining that there were no amusements quite innocent in which lively young people could take an interest; and I thought it possible that seeing her mistake illustrated in girls as clever as herself might have more effect than anything I could say unaided by example. The Miss Hills lived in comparative retirement. The water was a barrier, that, in a great measure, cut them from society, and they only occasionally had companions of their own age; but this privation, so far from rendering them discontented, made them only, as Louisa very prettily said to Christina, the more happy to see those friends who took the trouble to visit them.

Since I had been forced into so close intimacy with the Philipsons, I could scarcely avoid drawing many comparisons, and between them and the Hills, there was one essential difference, which, whether or not remarked by Christina, struck me most forcibly. The Philipsons

thought only of passing agreeably the present time, without regarding whether their amusements would bear reflection; and when not engaged with some frolic in hand, their conversation degenerated into the most commonplace gossip, generally to the injury or ridicule of their neighbours. The pleasures of the Miss Hills, on the contrary, lay much in the acquirement of knowledge, and the cultivation of their talents, without being on the outlook for amusement: they found it in their various pursuits, and were happy in their every-day routine of employments and recreations. Mrs Hill was often complimented on the goodness of her children's dispositions, but she was herself aware that what in them called forth this commendation was no superior amiability of nature, but the result, with a blessing from on high, of the course of education she had pursued, and on this subject she has occasionally, when we have been sitting together, explained to me her views. It was not the years of childhood that were her chief anxiety, for, as her children were intelligent, good-tempered, and docile, she had found little trouble, and much pleasure in directing them; but it was for the time that had now arrived, when Louisa and Fanny could no longer be guarded as children, and had the principal part of their time at their own disposal. From the retirement in which they lived they were spared many temptations, though peculiar, and no less to be dreaded, dangers might arise from even a life of seclusion, and her care had been to supply them with mental resources that should prevent them longing for absent pleasures, or

from falling a prey to that source of so much evil and misery to young girls—unoccupied imaginations.

Christina with interest asked questions of how they spent their days, and at her request they showed her their books, their drawings of native flowers, and collections of various natural curiosities, which they had neatly arranged in little cabinets.

Christina, who was readily caught with novelty, thought she would like to collect insects, and to paint in water colours, and as she held in her hand a really valuable book of resemblances of bush flowers, eagerly asked if I could teach her. Unfortunately I could not, my style in drawing being landscapes; but I had no doubt that if she wished to learn, her mamma would allow her to take lessons from some master. Miss Hill suggested that it would be very pleasant if they could form a class together, and it was agreed that both the mothers should be petitioned to consent to such an arrangement. From drawing they went to music, and the Miss Hills begged Christina to try with them a trio, which they had not yet learnt for want of a third voice. Christina replied, that if it was at all difficult she could make nothing of it; but assured that it was simple, she consented to try. Mrs Hill came in while they were at the piano, laughing at each other's blunders, and joining the group, gave several useful hints. She had a correct ear herself, and admonished her daughters whenever they made any false notes.

"I am sure, Mrs Hill, I make a great many false

notes," said Christina; "I wish you would tell me when I go wrong."

Mrs Hill smiled. "You are very frank, Miss Dare. I will tell you if I see occasion."

By patience and perseverance the song was learned, and Mrs Hill said she would ask them to sing it to Mr Hill in the evening, before Miss Dare went home. Christina was pleased with her own success, and declared that she had never mastered a song so easily.

"You wished to master it," observed Mrs Hill, "and when the intention is sincere, success is generally the reward."

In a tone half laughing, half serious, Christina answered, "Oh, that cannot be in all cases, I am sure, for I have often wished to be very good, and I am just as far from being so as ever."

Mrs Hill looked grave. "You are entering on a different question, Miss Dare, and one too serious for the present discussion. In doing right our own will is not sufficient, though even then a sincere desire will effect a great deal. And have you always, when wishing to act well, endeavoured with as much energy and patience to avoid temptation, and to correct your defects, as in practising this song you each time guarded against the errors you have before committed?"

Mark accompanied us reluctantly on this visit, considering himself quite too manly to companionise with Frank Hill. He had gone, meanwhile, with the little boy into the garden, where, by his own showing, he

must have made himself at first very disagreeable. Frank was very anxious to entertain him, but Mark, discontented at being condemned for an entire morning to the society of a mere child, would be pleased with nothing, and seems to have indulged himself in turning most of Frank's pursuits into ridicule.

Having taken him over the garden, Frank asked if he would like to see the carpenter's shop, where, he told him, he had tools of his own, and was then making a trellis for his vine. Mark half contemptuously assented. Once in the workshop, however, his humour changed, his opinion of his companion rose, when he found that in the arts of sawing and planing he was fully as expert as himself. Mr Hill encouraged his son in his carpentering tastes, as affording an amusement that could be pursued under shelter during the heat of the day; and Mark volunteering to help him in the piece of work he had in hand, soon forgot the few years' difference of age, and became as pleased with both his occupation and his companion as Christina meanwhile was with hers indoors.

When at length Louisa went to summon them to the two o'clock dinner, she found them busily at work in their shirt-sleeves, unmindful how time had passed, and the best friends possible.

"I thought I should find you here," said Lousia. "I am afraid, Mr Dare, you are not hungry if you have not thought of dinner; it is ready, will you come?"

"Now I think of it I am very hungry," replied Mark; "but we have been too busy to remember dinner; look,

Miss Hill, what we have done ; this is a trellis for Frank's vine, that was trailing on the ground."

Louisa looked and admired, and they then all returned to the house.

Mr Hill, whom we had not before seen, joined us at table, and after asking some questions of the young ladies as to how they had amused themselves, he inquired, "And what have you found to do all morning, Mark? I am afraid you think Frank too much of a child to be a companion?"

"No indeed, sir," replied Mark, with animation, "we have been so busy in the workshop, though Frank knows far more of carpentering than I do, and we have finished the trellis for his vine."

"Not finished it, surely?" said Mr Hill; "there was a great deal to do."

"Yes, papa, they have," said Louisa, "and finished it so well. They were working like two carpenters when I went to call them to dinner; I am sure Mr Mark must be very tired, for he is not accustomed to it, like Frank."

Mark laughed at the idea of being tired, and Mr Hill said good-naturedly that he must go after dinner and inspect their work.

As I looked round the table I could not but be pleased with the countenances of my pupils, they were animated, but at the same time calm and gentle; and I thought how much amiability actually embellishes the features, for their faces were to-day invested with a charm that they had never exhibited when their spirits were elevated

with the false excitement, which they and the Philipsons mistook for happiness.

It had been settled that we should not leave until sundown, and this arrangement proved fortunate, as in the afternoon a hot wind set in. After dinner, as the day was very oppressive, Mrs Hill proposed that we should lie down for an hour or two, and her daughters, showing me to a spare room, said they would treat Christina with less ceremony, and invite her into their own chamber.

"If you want anything, Miss Norris, you have only to speak," said Louisa; "our room is next to yours, and we shall be sure to hear you."

They left me to rest, and retired to the apartment occupied by the sisters.

"Fanny lies down every afternoon," observed Louisa, "and I read to her; if you like to lie down too, Miss Dare, I will read to you both."

"Oh! I never lie down in the middle of the day," replied Christina; "and I like best to talk."

Louisa said she liked to talk also, and during the next two hours conversation did not seem to flag at all. I could, without trouble, have heard all that was said, but I was provided with a book, and paid no attention. At about five o'clock there was a brickfielder, and one of the Miss Hills remarked it would cool the air, and they would be able shortly to go out for a ramble.

"Is the sun nearly down?" asked Christina; "I am so sorry."

"Are you?" replied one of her companions. "Would

you rather not walk? we will go or not, as you like."

"Oh! no," said Christina; "I shall like to walk, but I am sorry that this day is nearly over. Are all your days as pleasant as this has been?"

"No," answered Louisa, "for you are not always here."

"But I don't mean that," said Miss Dare; "are you always as happy as we have been to-day without doing anything?"

"Do you think we have been doing nothing to-day? I think we have been doing a great deal."

"But are you always contented to be so quiet; do you never wish to do things you are not allowed?"

"What sort of things?" asked Miss Hill in a tone of surprise, which I imagine rather embarrassed Christina, for she answered—

"Oh,—I don't know—do you ever go on the water?"

"Not alone," replied Louisa, "not without some experienced person; but we go sometimes with papa fishing parties, and Frank, when he is a little older, is to learn to row; papa wishes him to be able to do all those sort of things. But you ask, Miss Dare, if we don't wish to do what we are not allowed; we are very seldom forbidden to do anything, for our own sense of right would, of course, prevent us doing what is wrong or improper; and with our different occupations, and the garden, and that never-failing resource of talking, we never wish for anything beyond what we have."

"Your father and mother must have great confidence

in you," observed Christina, thoughtfully; "but if you see so few people, what do you find to talk about?"

"Oh! we are never much at a loss," replied Louisa, laughing; "sometimes talking sense, and sometimes nonsense."

"But tell me the sort of things you talk about," persisted Christina. "First, when you talk sense?"

"My dear Miss Dare, what strange questions; what do other girls talk about? We speak of our studies, and the books we read, and what we shall do when we are come out."

"And sometimes," said Fanny, "of what we hear in church, and what papa tells us when he explains the Bible to us."

"Oh yes, dear Fanny," exclaimed Louisa, "I thought Miss Dare would understand we talked about that."

"Do you take pleasure in talking of such things?" said Christina; "how I wish I did."

"If you wish it, dear Miss Dare, you will soon do so," said Fanny; "remember what mamma told us."

"But Mrs Hill herself said, that wishing to be good is different from anything else," said Christina; "and I am sure it must be so, for I have often wished with all my heart, and even made a great many good resolutions, but it was of no use, for I broke them on the first temptation."

Fanny's reply I did not hear, for her voice was low, but after she had spoken there was a pause.

"I wish," said Christina at last, "I could think and feel as you do, you are so much better than I am; but

then you are in the habit of hearing good things talked about, which I am not; I have fewer advantages."

"We have a great many advantages, and I hope we do not undervalue them," replied Miss Hill; "yet it appears to me that if one is once awakened to the importance of endeavouring to do one's best, it can require no outward stimulus to keep up the impression."

"It may be so, but I am sure one wants something to keep one up to being good, at least I do."

"But is there nothing in your family to keep you up to it?" asked Fanny. "Miss Norris is a very good person, does she not talk to you?"

"Oh yes, Miss Norris is a very good person," replied Christina, "but somehow we haven't the way of attending to her. Albert is the only one who listens to her when she speaks, and he is very much improved since she came."

I did not desire to hear myself discussed; I, therefore, put on my bonnet, and went down to the drawing-room, where I found Mr Hill and Mark. They were conversing seriously, or rather the former was giving some religious advice and instruction to the boy, who was listening with apparent attention. Not choosing to be an interruption, I seated myself with a book in one of the windows. Before long Miss Dare made her appearance, and Mr Hill addressed her also. The conversation up-stairs having been latterly of a grave tendency, had prepared Christina to receive well what he said, and though, when I saw her blush and steal a glance at Mark, I almost feared she might treat his words as she often

did mine, the apprehension was without foundation. Mr Hill had a manner peculiarly interesting to young people; his mildness relieved Christina and Mark from any fear they might have felt in conversing with him, and though silent at first, they presently asked him several questions. To these Mr Hill replied most fully and satisfactorily, and encouraged them to state their difficulties. He spoke with a plainness particularly calculated to do them good, and both looked half sorry when the entrance of the young ladies and their mother, prepared for walking, terminated the conversation.

As we left the room, Mark's attention was caught by a fine waratah which was in the centre of a vase of flowers, and he stopped to ask what it was. He had never, he said, seen such a flower before, and would like to take one home to his aunt. Mrs Hill knew it could not be unknown to his aunt, but replied that she believed he would find some in our walk, and Frank mentioned where there was a fine bush in blossom.

The evening was then cool and pleasant, and we had a very agreeable walk; the girls were on the outlook for flowers to draw the following day, and the activity of Mark and Frank was put in requisition to obtain those which grew out of our reach. They had a scramble also for the waratah, but this served only to put them into spirits.

Tea was ready by our return, and when the things were removed, Christina, Louisa, and Fanny sang the trio to Mr Hill. It was then getting late, or rather there being no twilight, and the evening closing fast in, it was

right to prepare for our row across the harbour. Very different were my reflections on this day from those that had followed any other I had spent in company with my pupils. I had not an uneasy feeling connected with them, nor reason to disapprove of a single thing I had seen or heard from either.

Witnessing for the last some months little save perverseness and self-will, I had begun to be disheartened respecting them; but the good conduct of this day reanimated my hopes, and inspired me with fresh confidence. I felt convinced that it was only from thoughtlessness, and the force of bad example, that they had hitherto occasioned me so much pain, and though no doubt had they possessed in reality the strength of character they wished to claim, they would not have been thus easily influenced and dependent on others, I was persuaded that their natural dispositions were good, and that they had not only the capability, but were likely to become in due time all I could desire—all that is estimable and to be admired.

This pleasing train of thought I pursued while they, a few steps in advance, were discussing the incidents of the day.

"What a pleasant day we have had," said Christina, "and yet it has been so quiet, and we have done nothing that is wrong, or that we should wish to conceal. I am not sure but what, after all, we should be happier if we were always good."

"I have been thinking almost the same thing," replied Mark. "I really think we have been happier to-

day than we have ever been with the Philipsons. We have been very merry with them sometimes, but there is never any satisfaction in looking back upon it afterwards. Now in this there is. I wonder if Mrs Hill will ask us to go again."

"I hope she will, I should like to go; and you see, Mark, it is all a mistake what Jane and Philipson always say, about good people being stupid and melancholy. The Miss Hills are neither; they are quite as clever and amusing, and a great deal better educated, I have a notion, than Jane Philipson; and Frank, instead of the little milksop I expected to find him, is a fine, plucky boy, up to anything. I am determined to give a trial to being good, and see if I am happier."

"So will I too, but take care, she is just behind."

I now came up to them, and though they did not make me a confidant of their resolutions, they certainly spoke in a manner very different from usual.

At home we learned that Mrs Dare had received a letter from her husband, saying that he had been persuaded by his brother to prolong his visit, and would not return to Sydney just yet. There was also one for Mark from his father, a very harsh, admonitory letter, warning him to be diligent at his studies, and circumspect in his conduct, and the severity was untempered by a single kind expression. On any other occasion Mark would have treated such advice with contempt, and have indulged in language the most undutiful; but now, though seemingly rather hurt by his father's apparent indifference towards him, he confessed that he

had reason to be displeased, and said that he would endeavour to give him greater satisfaction. This promised well, and I hoped and thought that we were entering on a new era, in which my young relations would do themselves and me justice.

CHAPTER XV.

A SENSATIONAL EPISODE.

A NIGHT'S sleep only strengthened Christina in her good resolutions. She and her cousin were both the following morning down in time for prayers, which they had not been for many weeks, and immediately after breakfast she seated herself steadily to her books, proposing to Mark to apply to his holiday tasks. To these lessons he had not given any thought, and had declared he had no intention of performing them at all; but as he stood, with his hat on, and his whip in his hand, he hesitated, and said, "I will certainly do them, and well too, but I shall have lots of time in the afternoon, I want to ride now."

Christina, by whom he was standing, said something to him in a low voice, "But we need not give up all pleasure to be good," said he.

"No, only when pleasure is opposed to duty," replied Miss Dare.

Mark exclaimed, "Oh, I forgot; something may come in the way in the afternoon; I 'll just run round to the

stable and tell John that he need not saddle the brown pony, and then come and work like a horse till dinner time."

For the whole of that morning they continued an unremitting attention to study. Having hitherto neglected his lessons, Mark was obliged to work hard to make up for the time he had lost. This was the last day of his holidays, and I had not much expectation that he would get them finished before returning to school on Monday; but diligence will effect wonders, and before dinner he completed all but what he could, with ease, do in the afternoon. Christina made an attempt to draw and colour one of the waratahs Mark had brought from the North Shore, but the flower was, perhaps, the most difficult she could have selected, and in her first essay she was almost baffled; she, however, likewise persevered, and before we laid aside our books, produced a very correct, if not very finished, resemblance.

When our hour of walking arrived, Christina proposed a road, in which we were not likely to meet the Philipsons. She said plainly that she had no wish to fall in with them at present. I was of course only too glad to hear her express such a sentiment; but we had just retired to get ready when a knock was heard at the door, and a servant informed us that Mr and Miss Philipson and Sir Lawrence Delafield were in the school-room. They had called, it would appear, with a twofold object. First, to hear the news of the visit to the Hills, and amuse themselves by turning what had there taken place into ridicule; and, secondly, to persuade the

Dares to join them in a water excursion the ensuing afternoon. In both they failed. Christina would not allow them to laugh at the Hills; she and Mark united in saying that they did not know when they had spent a more agreeable day, and that they were acquainted with no nicer people. So decidedly did they speak that the Philipsons, having persisted longer than good breeding could in any degree warrant, were forced to give it up, and hastened to state the other purport of their visit.

I was for a moment fearful lest this temptation might prove too powerful, but I was kept in no suspense, for Miss Dare at once declined, and her cousin added, "I think we have had more than enough of that sort of thing lately; I am tired of it, and my aunt disapproves of the water."

"You have become very scrupulous of your aunt's wishes suddenly," said Philipson; "but there is no reason why she should know anything of it."

"We have deceived my mother very often, Mr Philipson," said Christina, "but we intend to do so no more."

There was a pause after this speech, which I saw caused no small surprise and vexation; the countenances of both Mr and Miss Philipson expressed clearly what was in their thoughts—viz., that if their companions continued to hold such opinions their influence was at an end, and that unless they succeeded in again lulling their newly-awakened consciences all hope of advantage from the acquaintance was vain; but to this they would not submit without a struggle, and while Philipson tried the force of every kind of taunting upon Mark, his sister

adopted a different plan towards Christina, having recourse to a tone of injured affection, which she judged on one so warm-hearted would not be thrown away.

"It is scarcely fair to throw us off in this way, Christina," said she; "I confess that I am hurt by this proof that my sincere regard for you is so entirely unreturned. How commonly is it said that no reliance should be placed on friendship! I always believed otherwise, for I judged the hearts of others by my own; how sad it is to be undeceived."

But Christina's plain, good sense showed her how absurd was this affectation of sentiment.

"What nonsense this is, Jane," she exclaimed; "is it any proof of want of regard for you, that having been in the habit of deceiving my mother, I at last see it is wrong, and refuse to do so any more? I never said that I intend to drop your acquaintance; I hope there are some things we can do together which are not wrong."

"A great many, I hope, my dear Christina," said Miss Philipson, softly; "and for this fresh proof of your goodness how much more than ever must I admire you."

"Oh! don't speak in that way, Jane," said Christina, "there is no goodness in the case. You know perfectly well that I often do things that are very wrong, but I don't wish to go to this party."

"Well, perhaps you are right, though the party will be nothing without you, to me at all events; so I shall not go either, but I hope we shall meet in the course of next week."

"I don't know, indeed," rejoined Christina; "nex

week I shall be very much engaged with my lessons, which I have neglected too much of late."

Sir Lawrence, Annette, and myself had meanwhile made a little group at a round table, where the former was listlessly turning over the leaves of a book containing views of English scenery, while Annette studied a new number of the Paris fashions, in which she was deeply absorbed when he handed her his volume of prints, saying, as he pointed to a large house standing in a park; "What do you think of that, Annette?"

"It is a beautiful house," replied Annette; "but it has got your name below it; whom does it belong to?"

"It did belong to my father; it is mine now."

"Is it yours?" said Annette, regarding the plate with increased interest. "Sir Thomas Delafield; Sir Lawrence, I think, sounds prettier."

"And how does Lady Delafield sound?" asked Sir Lawrence, in a half whisper.

Annette laughed and coloured, and said it sounded beautiful. Sir Lawrence did not mention that the estate, though his own indeed, was encumbered to nearly its value, and that the house had to be let, because the proprietor could not afford to live there.

In the first pause in the conversation of the others, he threw down his book, yawned, and observed languidly, "When you have settled that affair, good folks, we had better continue our walk, for we are losing the best part of the afternoon." He did not appear to have

noticed the excitement his companions had manifested, and they, finding they could make nothing of the Dares, took his hint, and they all departed.

The remainder of this day with my pupils fulfilled the promise of the beginning, as did many successive ones, to the term of a week. During this period I had not only nothing whereof to complain, but reason to be most truly thankful for the change that had taken place. Their studies were attended to, and the only fault I could on any pretence find was, that to these they now applied with too great energy, devoting to them so much time that I felt the assiduity could not last, and feared what might be the consequences of a reaction. My chief security was that they seemed inclined to take to amusements independent of the Philipsons. Mark obtained from his aunt leave to appropriate a spare outhouse, which he began to fit up as a workshop, laying out nearly all his pocket-money in tools. Christina commenced a *hortus siccus*, like the Miss Hills, and the amusement proved profitable as well as innocent, as she was induced to study botany, in order to know how to class her flowers. Witnessing their contentment in these occupations, which left them little opportunity, even had they the inclination, to dwell on schemes of folly, I thought of the truth of Dr Johnson's remark that "wild wishes and vain imaginations seldom gain possession of the mind but when it is found empty and unoccupied." Half the errors of my pupils had arisen from idleness; young people of dull parts might be satisfied without subjects of interest, but they were too active-minded not to

create for themselves an interest, and I anticipated an improvement in their characters, happiness, and conduct, now that they had discovered this in rational pursuit.

Towards the end of the week, however, they more than once mentioned the Philipsons, and Christina observed that she hoped Jane had not taken offence, she would be rather glad to see her now; it would not do to break with her so suddenly. I was myself surprised that we were not molested by the Philipsons; but the fact was, that they were at this time taken up with Sir Lawrence Delafield. That young man, without anything to occupy him, without even many acquaintances in Sydney, found Mrs Philipson's house a convenient lounge, and was there a great deal, where, flirting with Annette, who, it need scarcely be said, received his attentions very graciously, and flattered by the mother, who told him she had known his father when visiting Mrs Torrington, he was able to pass the mornings with less *ennui* than by any other resource in his power. Sometimes he would drive out Mrs Philipson in his tandem, and frequently one of the girls, the elder of whom studied to amuse him by her lively conversation, while the younger without effort pleased him by her good humour and prettiness.

So stood matters with regard to the two families when the second Sunday after our visit to the Hills came round. This day I had for many weeks past hailed as an interval, or breathing time, in the midst of anxiety and distress; on it I had leisure for reflection, leisure to

compose my mind after the trials of the week, and leisure to acquire strength to bear those I was sure were in store for me in that which was to come; on it the usual follies of my pupils were laid aside, although they did not then appreciate it as—as I trust they do now. There was, unfortunately, in Mr Dare's family little to mark the Sabbath, save the exemption from certain occupations; as a day of rest, by my cousin and other members of the household, it was valued, but not as the holy of the Lord. Church was regularly attended once, but the distance being too great to be twice traversed, the remaining hours were killed by the young people in loitering in the grounds, reading entertaining books, and discussing the frolics in which they had latest engaged. There were, however, no meetings with the Philipsons, and these, which were the principal source of my vexation, it was a relief being spared. But on the morning of which I write, the calm I anticipated would be but the continuation of tranquillity, and I felt I could scarcely rejoice sufficiently in the improvement our visit to the Hills had brought. Alas! alas! quickly was it drawing to its termination.

The day was fine, unusually pleasant, and Mrs Dare having a slight indisposition which prevented her attending divine service, we agreed that a walk to church would be preferable to the carriage. We were getting ready, and Christina, being in a little difficulty about some portion of her dress, had summoned me into her room, when a step in the passage, and a gentle tap at the door, announced a visitor. Permission to enter was

given, and Miss Jane Philipson presented herself. Christina met her much as usual, and Miss Jane having affectionately embraced her friend, observed, "It seems an age since we have met, and now I am come to ask you to take a walk with us."

"To-day," said Christina, in surprise; "you surely forget it is Sunday; we are just going to church—are not you?"

"It is as good to go to church in the afternoon," replied Miss Philipson; "in a quiet walk there is no harm. We came on purpose to ask you, and Annette, and Augustus, and Sir Lawrence are waiting below."

"Sir Lawrence!" repeated Christina, looking more and more surprised; "why, he is always with you now."

While I thought, "How completely this poor, young man has fallen into their clutches!"

"Oh! why, you know mamma was acquainted with some of his family, and her friend"——

But Christina interrupted, "Oh! spare me Mrs Torrington—I know—I know."

"But will you come?" said Miss Philipson, appearing somewhat discomposed. "You will be persuaded, I am sure." This last in a coaxing tone, but Christina answered steadily—

"No, indeed, I cannot. I never gave up going to church for the sake of a walk, and I will not begin now."

"Dare will not be so cross," exclaimed Miss Philipson; "he will go with us."

In spite of the resolution Christina evinced, I feared

that Mark's might not stand, especially as having lived so many years in the bush, where there was no church within reach, he by no means regarded the attendance on divine service in the same light as did his cousin, and I involuntarily interposed, "Oh, Miss Philipson, do not tempt him."

The words were no sooner uttered than repented of; for they drew upon me one of Miss Philipson's most insulting glances, and a contemptuous rebuff, "Pray, Miss Norris, what business is it of yours?"

But Christina, rudely as she occasionally spoke to me herself, would never hear me disrespectfully addressed by another. "Jane, you forget yourself," she said, in an indignant tone.

"I beg pardon," rejoined Miss Philipson, "the warmth of my regard for you carried me away; but are you quite resolute—this beautiful day too? Well, since you are so obstinate, I must see if your cousin is more persuadable."

"I think you will find Mark of the same opinion," said Christina, as she shook hands coldly; "but he must answer for himself. I am not ready to go down stairs yet. Miss Norris, will you accompany Miss Philipson to the drawing-room?"

I of course complied, and as we entered the drawing-room by one door, Mark made his appearance at the other. He also seemed a good deal surprised with the Sunday visitors, and more so when informed for what they had come, saying, like his cousin, "To walk to-day—are you not going to church?"

"To church to be sure," said Sir Lawrence; "we can go together."

Mark hesitated, and his companions continued their persuasions.

"There would be no harm in walking to church together," said he, "only I don't like to leave Christina."

"Oh, you can't go anywhere without Christina," said Philipson. "I suppose she takes care of you."

"What an ass you are, Philipson," exclaimed Mark.

"Well, I don't care if I do go with you; Miss Norris, you and Christina must go by yourselves."

"And do you yield so easily to the first temptation, Mr Mark?" I said.

Mark turned upon me sharply; but, seeing real distress written in my face, he checked his angry retort, and, too kind-hearted willingly to give pain, said, "Well, Miss Norris, don't worry yourself about it, for I will go to church; we all will, won't we, Philipson?"

"Can Miss Norris doubt it?" replied Mr Philipson.

"This does not satisfy me, Mr Mark," I said; "for right well I know that when you are out, you will forget all about church."

"Nay, I give you my word of honour to go," replied Mark; "and now, if this does not satisfy you, I can't help it; let us be off at once."

This incident depressed me much. I saw in it the first symptoms of backsliding, and were it not that I had comfort in Christina, I should have been very dejected indeed. She went quietly to church with Albert and

myself, and was not at all unsettled by the visit of the Philipsons.

Mark did not return at the usual hour, and this suggested to me a fear that, careless of their promise, they had either not gone to church or had embarked afterwards on some frolic. Dinner came, we dined without him, and though more than once Christina expressed curiosity as to what was detaining him, she said nothing to lead me to suppose that she regretted her own decision. After dinner she applied herself to read a book on confirmation, which Mr Hill had lent her, advising her at the same time to take advantage of an approaching opportunity to be confirmed, and discussing it with me, her mind appeared in a more proper and placid state than I had often seen it, when her cousin, flushed and excited, came into the schoolroom. He threw himself at once into a chair, and, without giving us the smallest clue to the cause of his merriment, laughed immoderately.

"Oh, Christina! you don't know what you have missed. When will you go and call on Lady Delafield?"

"Who is Lady Delafield? What have I missed? What do you mean?" exclaimed Christina, in a fever to hear that she had not missed anything very charming.

"I will tell you all about it directly, only let me have my laugh out first."

"Have you dined, Mr Mark?" I said in the first pause.

"Dined, yes, and drunk the healths of Sir Lawrence and Lady Delafield."

"But, for Heaven's sake, tell me who is Lady Delafield," said Christina, impatiently.

"I 'll tell you everything in due time," replied Mark, "but not a minute before—now listen."

He then told us that after they left the house, instead of proceeding straight to church, Philipson led the way in quite a contrary direction. This he for some time did not observe; and when he at last noticed that the bells had all ceased ringing, and said they must make the best of their way back to St John's, his companions inquired whether he supposed they had any intention of going to church. "I said," continued Mark, "that I had promised to go, and go I would, even if I parted company with them." Philipson turned sulky about it, and the girls were rather cross; but just then we came to a chapel of some kind where a good many people were entering, and Philipson said, "Well, if you will go to church, let's go in here; I suppose you are not particular about forms, and it will be some fun seeing the service." I thought it would be all the same, a church is a church. At all events I could not make a row in the street, and in we went. The service is quite different from that in our church, but I must tell you about that presently. We got places without any difficulty, and had a very good sermon, though the Philipsons and Delafield kept giggling and grimacing the whole time. When it was over, just as we were going out, a gaily-dressed party left the seat behind ours, and went up to

the clergyman. I did not know what they were going to do, but Sir Lawrence said they were going to be married, and then he whispered to Annette, "What do you say, Annette, shall you and I make another couple?" Annette laughed, and said she did not care; and I said I would lend them my wedding-ring, (I have carried it in my pocket ever since Shrove Tuesday,) so he pulled her arm through his, and they went out into the aisle. Jane looked at me and laughed, and I suppose I grinned, but we all followed, and there they were married."

"Not married! not actually married?" exclaimed simultaneously Christina and I.

"The service was regularly gone through," replied Mark; "the parson was quite a dottled old man, who asked no questions, and it seemed right enough; whether they are married or not, I don't know."

"And to think," said Christina, "that I should have missed all this; the only day that I have not walked with you I don't know when; how unlucky!"

"Unlucky, Miss Christina!" I replied. "You ought rather to be thankful that you have had nothing to do with such an affair."

"Why should you say so?" asked Mark; "do you think we did wrong?"

Acute and clever as Mark certainly was, on the one subject of right and wrong he was extraordinarily obtuse. I really believe that until I spoke he had not a suspicion that the present case was to be considered in any graver light than as a frolic.

"How can you ask such a question?" I said. "Have you not been mocking at one of God's ordinances, and jesting in the house dedicated to His service?"

Mark was for a moment silenced, but Christina observed, "But everybody laughs about marriages—it is a fair subject to jest upon."

"If you consider," I replied, "the jesting is confined to quizzing the parties, which, foolish as it is, is very different from profaning the ordinance and the house of God."

Mark looked rather conscience-struck. "You are a strange person, Miss Norris, you always contrive to make things appear different; but let me go on now, for I have not told you nearly all; the most important part has yet to come. We wrote our names in a book, and as the parson seemed then to suspect there was something wrong, and inclined to investigate further, we made our escape as fast as possible. Philipson said we must go to his mother's house, and drink the health of Sir Lawrence and Lady Delafield; so we all went straight to Mrs Philipson's, and told her of the joke. But so far from laughing, as you know she generally does at any lark, Mrs Philipson looked extremely grave, and said, addressing Sir Lawrence, that however satisfied she might have been with the marriage, she could not approve of his depriving her of her daughter without ever asking her consent. 'Depriving you of your daughter! what do you mean?' said he. 'Yes,' Mrs Philipson replied, 'you will take her to England, or to the interior, where I shall perhaps never see her more.' Delafield

looked very foolish, but said it was only a joke. 'A joke, Sir Lawrence! what do you mean? such subjects are not to be jested with.' A few words more passed, but it ended in her saying, 'I must have a little conversation with you in private, if you please;' and poor Delafield, very much crest-fallen, was obliged to go with her into the veranda; they held a long parley. Jane said she would find out what her mother had to say, and placed herself close to the venetian blinds, but she did not hear much, only something about Annette's beauty, and Annette's expectations."

"What are they, I should like to know?" interrupted Christina, who, like myself, had been listening in astonishment to this strange recital.

"I don't know," replied her cousin, "but such were Mrs Philipson's words, and she said, that though she had a great regard for Sir Lawrence, thought him a very nice young man, and so forth, she had had other views for her daughter. As, however, they had chosen to marry without her consent, there was nothing for it but that they be married properly, at St John's, with as little delay as possible; in short, she succeeded in frightening him completely, and the upshot of the matter is that they are to be married on Tuesday."

"Tuesday!" I repeated, "short notice indeed," while Christina began again to regret not having been present.

"You would have thought it fun," said Mark; "but we are both invited to the marriage, and you, I believe, are asked to be bridesmaid, at least here is a note for you."

He took one from his pocket, and threw it across the table to his cousin, who observed, as she tore it open, "That is the next best thing; but a proper marriage in St John's won't be half the fun of the mock one."

The note Miss Dare read aloud, and it was very carefully worded, with a view, no doubt, to its being inspected by Mrs Dare.

"My dear Miss Dare,—You will perhaps be surprised at a request to act as bridesmaid to my daughter, Annette, on so early a day as Tuesday next. Her marriage with Sir Lawrence Delafield has, I must confess, been arranged at last somewhat precipitately; yet it is so satisfactory in every respect, Sir Lawrence is so truly estimable a young man, and so sincerely attached to Annette, that I do not feel I should be warranted in opposing his wish of its being thus hastened. If you have no objection to the office yourself, will you present my respectful compliments to Mrs Dare, (with whom I regret not having the honour of being acquainted,) and say that by granting you her consent she will be conferring on us both a favour and a pleasure. The bridal party will leave this as nearly as we can manage at half-past ten o'clock, and perhaps you and your cousin, Mark, who has already promised to join us, will be good enough to come here at that hour.—With every sentiment of regard, I am, my dear Miss Dare, very affectionately yours,

"Martha Philipson."

Upon this note Christina made no comment, but ran

with it out of the room, saying she must show it to her mother, and Mark and I being left together, he observed, "The sincerity of this note is beautiful; she would have us believe that the marriage has all along been in contemplation. I know that neither Sir Lawrence nor Annette—I beg her pardon, Lady Delafield—had an idea of such a thing seriously, though they chose to be so silly, and used to flirt a good deal; he has been taken in, if ever man was."

"But not by Annette," I replied; "she, poor girl, is but a tool in the hands of others, the victim of her mother's art. I have always thought her a good deal the best of them; and had she married a worthy person, who would teach her what is right, and remove her from the contagion of her own family, there might be a hope of her turning out much that is amiable."

"Well, what more could you wish for her, Miss Norris?" said Mark; "is she not going to marry a truly estimable young man?"

I did not smile, being too seriously distressed by the folly which had so involved Mark, to be amused by anything he could say.

Christina re-entered the schoolroom. "Mamma has no objections to our going, Mark; she said the note is a very pretty one, and very well expressed; I *read* it to her."

"The note is better than I should have imagined one from Mrs Philipson's pen would be," said I; "a variety of trifles have given me the impression that she is very imperfectly educated; perhaps I have done her an injustice."

"This is not the time to say so, Miss Norris," said Christina, laying the note before me. "The composition may be well enough, but what do you think of this spelling?—attached with one t, and dear deer; two mistakes in this short note, was there ever anything so disgraceful?"

"Just like her," exclaimed Mark; "a humbug in everything! I always knew she was as ignorant as a bull-dog. She said one day, that the pleasantest way of going to Paris from London is by rail."

Christina laughed. "Did she say that is the way Mrs Torrington usually travelled? But how strange it is, for she is clever too."

"Isn't she?" said Mark, expressively. "I think that the way she has nailed Sir Lawrence Delafield is the most masterly thing I ever saw."

"But could you have believed, Miss Norris," resumed Christina, "that she would have spelt so badly?"

"Yes, I could," I replied, "for I have long seen that she is a person, not to say of limited education, but ignorant of many of the commonest things, and one who, I feel assured, has not always belonged to the rank in which she now moves; so these blunders scarcely surprise me."

"I am not sure that I much differ with you," said Christina.

CHAPTER XVI.

MARRIAGE FESTIVITIES.

HOW different were my feelings when I rose on Monday, from what they had been at the same hour on that eventful Sunday; truly the week set in with all its cares. Deeply distressed by what had taken place, the disappointment in the steadiness of my young relations went very hard with me, not only as concerned the fault of yesterday, but as it deprived me of the hope I had entertained of their improvement, and so uncomfortable did I feel my situation, that I again contemplated resigning it. Had Mr Dare been at home I should have lost no time in speaking to him, but I did not choose to do anything until his return, and was obliged, therefore, to look forward to another fortnight of endurance. The prospect was the more painful, as I had not one hope on which to rest, and bitter were my regrets for having ever accepted the office of governess, instead of accompanying Joseph to Wollongong.

It happened that I had engaged to be absent this afternoon for some hours. A lady, who had kindly

given my brother house-room until he obtained a cottage to his mind, had come to Sydney for a few days, and in compliance with his request, I called upon her. She seemed pleased with the attention, and begged me to spend Monday afternoon with her, and accompany her to a dentist's, saying that she was weak and nervous, and would feel my presence a comfort. Obtaining ready leave from Mrs Dare, I gave my own consent, secure of the good conduct of Christina in my absence; and now, although circumstances were changed, and I could no longer place that confidence in her, I did not like to send an excuse. I went, and had the satisfaction of feeling that I was of some use to Joseph's friend. We drank tea together, and at eight o'clock Mrs Dare's carriage, as she had kindly promised, came to take me home. What was my surprise on entering it, to find Mark and Christina, both in evening costume, awaiting me.

"What is to be done now?" I inquired; "you are very gay."

"We are going to a dance," was the reply, "at Mrs Philipson's, with mamma's permission; you, too, are invited, and mamma requests you will accompany us."

"Really and truly?" I asked, distrustfully.

"Yes, truly," replied Christina; "here is a note from mamma for you."

"We suspected," added Mark, laughing, "that as we have cried *wolf* several times, you might not believe us, so we asked aunt to write."

I gave a sigh to a state of things which they seemed

to regard as only subject for merriment; but the note really containing a request from Mrs Dare that I would accompany them to Mrs Philipson's, and, if possible, not allow them to stay too late, I of course signified my readiness to comply.

As we drove to Wooloomooloo, they gave me the history of the party.

"Jane and Philipson wished for it," said Christina. "Their mother would not allow a regular dance, but said that if they chose to ask a few of their young friends for a quadrille, they might. It was to be on Wednesday, but Sir Lawrence and Annette both said they would dance at their own wedding, and insisted on its being the day before, instead of the day after."

Mrs Philipson received us with her usual grace and suavity, and I could see that she was full of joy and triumph, although her good breeding enabled her so far to restrain the outward exhibition of her feelings, that to a casual observer she might appear only happy and satisfied, as was natural on the occasion. As I was in the house, I thought it incumbent on me to offer a few civil words of congratulation, and I was detained while she replied at length, that she had indeed much reason to be satisfied with the very suitable alliance her daughter was about to form. She might, perhaps, have wished not to part with Annette while she was so young, and her character scarcely matured; but to such a man as Sir Lawrence, who was so sincerely attached, so everything she could desire in a son-in-law, with a number of other expressions of the same kind, all of which struck

me as being, what Mark would call such thorough humbug, that I was glad to make my escape. While she spoke, Mrs Philipson riveted upon me a very searching gaze. Mild as was the habitual expression of those soft hazel eyes, they were capable of assuming one of penetration, which seemed as if it would pierce your inmost soul; such a look it was that she now fixed upon me. Innocent as I was of all wish to investigate too curiously her affairs, she herself suggested suspicion, which otherwise might never have arisen in my mind, and I answered shortly, that it was a good thing when friends were satisfied.

The guests were all in full dress; the Brahams gorgeous, if not elegant, and the toilettes of the others in good taste. Jane could never pass for very young, but in pink, with pink flowers in her hair, she was certainly a handsome woman. Annette in white, as became a bride, with a wreath of white roses, looked very pretty and simple. She was graver than usual, and though this was probably caused by a feeling of mortification at the deportment of her intended husband, who was less devoted than might have been expected, it added to the interest of her appearance. Yet, to my mind, my own pupil surpassed them all. She wore a white embroidered muslin dress, and no ornament save a long floating rose-coloured sash, and her own bright glossy curls.

The first quadrille was formed, Mrs Braham playing; but it had hardly commenced when a servant put into Mrs Philipson's hand a letter, which the postman had just brought. Mrs Philipson begged to be excused, and

opened it; I happened to be seated near her, and observed that as she read her countenance changed; of what nature, however, the news was it was impossible to form a conjecture. When she had finished she placed it in her reticule, then crossing to where I sat, said, "How tiresome these milliners are; I am afraid we shall have a disappointment about Annette's dress to-morrow."

Miss Jane's attention was diverted from her partner while her mother perused the letter, she seemed also curious to hear what she said to me, and no sooner was the dance concluded than she came towards us.

"May I see that letter, mamma?"

"No, my dear, replied Mrs Philipson, "it is only from Mrs B——, about your sister's dress."

This was said carelessly, and Jane retired, but Mrs Philipson, in spite of her self-command, was, I observed, an altered person; graceful and polite in doing the honours she still was, but when not called upon to pay particular attention to any of her guests, she became very abstracted. At one period of the evening I especially remarked this. Annette was dancing with Sir Lawrence, and Jane had got up a little flirtation with an officer, a friend of his; both were, as I before said, in more than their ordinary looks, and Mrs Philipson's eyes followed all their movements, but it was with none of the pride with which I had sometimes before seen her watch them —she appeared rather to be full of uneasy thoughts regarding them.

Philipson was this evening unable to obtain leave

from his ship, having had it very often of late, and in consequence was not present; but in his absence everything went on quietly, it was therefore an advantage. Braham, not instigated to rudeness by the example of another, was as unobjectionable as it was possible for him to be; Sir Lawrence was always quiet, and particularly so this evening, and Miss Dare and Mark, when left to themselves, were lady-like and gentlemanly.

I relieved Mrs Braham at the piano, and was allowed to retain the place the principal part of the evening; at length, fatigued with the prolonged exertion of playing, as well as overpowered by the heat, which became very oppressive in the small room, when the young people gathered round a side-table to refresh themselves with fruit and lemonade, I stepped out into the veranda to enjoy the cool night air. There was a beautiful moon, which shed its silver beams on the shrubs in the garden, on the bay below, and on the dark forests beyond; the aspect of the harbour was calm as that of the heavens, clear and unruffled, it reflected the pale blue sky where the stars were not obscured by a single cloud. There is something in the repose of such an hour and scene that finds its way to the hearts of most, with a power to elevate and tranquillise the mind, and insensibly my thoughts ranged far from my own daily causes of anxiety and excitement. Suddenly, in the midst of my reflections, I was startled by hearing near me a sigh, almost amounting to a groan; I turned hastily, and saw Mrs Philipson, whose absence from the drawing-room I had not remarked, seated on one of the steps, her head rest-

ing against a flower-stand, and her hands, which clasped the letter I had seen her receive, convulsively pressed together, as if in agony. For a moment I supposed she was in bodily pain, but the moving of her lips, and the look of intense thought which contracted her brow, showed that her sufferings were mental. I stood motionless, she did not perceive me, and, with another deep-drawn sigh, murmured, as the merry laugh resounded within, "It is a blessing to get this over before he arrives, and it all comes out."

"Mrs Philipson!" said I. The exclamation was as much involuntary in my astonishment as to let her know she was not alone, but it roused her, and starting up, she exclaimed, "Miss Norris! you here! Have you been here long? did you hear what I said?—a—a scene from a play; I am in the habit of—of"——. She was forced to stop in the middle of the disjointed sentence, overcome by embarrassment, thus affording me an opportunity to say, "Do not alarm yourself, Mrs Philipson, I have been here only a few minutes; I left the drawing-room just as they went to supper."

"Have they gone to supper?" said Mrs Philipson, who had already regained her self-possession, although it cost her an evident effort to speak calmly. "Let us join them; what a happy evening this has been, what a pleasing prospect it opens to me."

This did not impose upon me, but any mystery there might be in the family, (and I now saw clearly, as I had before suspected, there was one,) was no concern of mine, so I replied merely, that I was waiting only until

Miss Dare was cool after dancing, to propose to her to go home, as the carriage, I understood, was come. Sir Lawrence overheard me speak to Christina, and requested us to set him down at his hotel, saying that he had ordered his cab at a late hour. This haste to get away was not very like the happy bridegroom, but we complied, and as it obliged us to make a longer round, Mark and Christina did not object to leave immediately.

As but one day intervened between the marriage being fixed and it taking place, there was no time to do much about dress, nor was there the smallest occasion for Miss Dare to get anything new to enable her to appear quite properly as bridesmaid. She and Miss Philipson, however, got pink tulle bonnets alike, and I may mention, as one other proof of the mean disposition of the latter young lady, that she made her companion pay for both.

In compliance with Mrs Philipson's request, Christina and her cousin left home for her house at an early hour, and I spent the morning in their absence with Mrs Dare, who, although she was so slightly acquainted with the parties, was quite interested in the marriage; and as soon as the young people returned, she begged me to meet them on the stairs, and bring Christina to her dressing-room.

Miss Dare did not look in as great spirits as when she set out, and on Mrs Dare saying, with eagerness unusual for her, "Now, Christina, tell me all your news; have you had a very gay wedding?" she replied, "Gay, oh no, mamma. I never was at a marriage before, but, I

am sure, if they are all like this, it is a great mistake to talk about the gaiety of weddings."

"Dear me!" said Mrs Dare, "I should have thought they would be all in such good spirits; it must have been a very happy occasion for the mother."

"I don't know whether it was or not," replied Christina, "she looked anything but happy; I cannot understand why, but she seemed altogether a different person. At any sound she quite started; once, when the church door opened in the middle of the service, she looked round and turned quite pale. What could it be? was it not very strange?"

"I never heard anything so extraordinary," said Mrs Dare. "But did Mrs Philipson look very handsome? how was she dressed?"

"In gray silk, with a white bonnet, and lace scarf."

"That would become her very much," said Mrs Dare, "and was in very good taste for a widow; perhaps her strange manner was caused only by agitation. She might be sorry to part with her daughter. You know, Christina, I should be very sorry to part with you, if you were to marry a person who would take you to England, however much I liked your husband."

"I don't think it was that," replied Miss Dare.

"But you have told us nothing about the bride yet," resumed Mrs Dare. "I am sure she must have looked very pretty."

"Yes, she did—I don't know either; she was very pale, and her eyes were very red; she looked as if she had been crying all morning, and she cried the whole time of

the ceremony. Sir Lawrence, too, was downright sulky. I thought sometimes he would not have made the answers."

Mrs Dare elevated her eye-brows in surprise.

"There was something wrong," continued Christina. "Jane also was out of humour; in short, Mr Philipson was the only person who was at all in spirits, and he carried it off well."

At this moment the clock on the mantelpiece struck.

"You are back sooner than I expected you," observed Mrs Dare; "had you a handsome breakfast?"

"Pretty well; there was a very handsome bridescake, which Sir Lawrence had paid for. I heard him say they asked him for it."

"Was such a thing ever heard of!" exclaimed Mrs Dare, roused into animation by her daughter's mention of these very unusual proceedings. "I am afraid, Christina, your friends are strange people."

Christina looked at me with a half laugh, and said, "Miss Norris has thought so for a long time, and I begin to think so myself; but the party was very dull, there was no fun at all; and Mark and I were quite glad when we got away."

She paused and hesitated before she continued. "There is one thing I am afraid you will not quite like, mamma, Mrs Philipson took possession of the carriage for herself and Annette, and actually offered Mrs Braham the fourth seat, but I would not stand that, and insisted on having Mark."

"And who, on earth, is Mrs Braham?" asked Mrs Dare.

"Oh, she is the wife of a shopkeeper," said Christina, blushing; "somehow or other the Philipsons know her."

Mrs Dare looked very much annoyed indeed, but she was destined to be yet more so; for Christina added, "And there were two of the Miss Brahams as bridesmaids, dressed almost like us. I never was so angry about anything; it put me quite out of humour, and I think that had the party been ever so agreeable, I should not have enjoyed it. It was very deceitful of Jane; for yesterday, when she called, she gave no hint that there were to be any bridesmaids but herself and me, and to-day she said they had intruded themselves. I almost think there is some reason why they are afraid to offend the Brahams, for I see they don't like them."

But Mrs Dare was now too angry to think of anything, but the extreme impertinence of Mrs Philipson in asking her daughter with such people; she was in happy ignorance of how often before they had associated, and it was not a moment to enlighten her.

"Had I known this," she exclaimed, in indignation, "you should never have been there."

Her colour rose very high, and aware that in her present state of health all excitement must be avoided, I did my utmost to persuade her that no insult could have been intended. When once ruffled she was not easily calmed, and it was not until I had given her eau de Cologne, and reminded her that there often were strange

assemblages at weddings, that her irritated temper subsided.

Christina had meanwhile retired to divest herself of her bonnet and scarf, and I soon followed to the schoolroom, where I found her and Mark lounging about, languid and dull, and as I entered Christina said, "Now I have a great mind to learn my lessons quietly for tomorrow, for I am quite tired with all this racketing."

CHAPTER XVII.

STRANGE REVELATIONS.

SEVERAL days passed quietly. At the expiration of that interval, during which nothing was seen of the Philipsons, Mrs Dare invited me to accompany her on a drive to Newtown. Her daughter having a cold, was unable to go out. Albert went with us; and Christina and Mark were at dinner together, when Jane and Philipson called, looking very much heated, having evidently walked fast. They were invited to partake of what was on the table, but replied, hurriedly, that they had come but for a moment, to warn Mark of an impending evil. He must prepare for a visit from the dissenting clergyman who had married Delafield and Annette. He had discovered the imposition, and had gone that very day to Mrs Philipson's, they supposed, for the purpose of lecturing them upon it.

"But," continued Miss Philipson, "I happily chanced to be sitting at the dining-room window, and saw him walking down the garden. I knew him at once, and had presence of mind to order the servant not to let him in. He would scarcely go away, and said he would

wait in the house until mamma should return from her walk—(mamma was safe in the parlour all the time)—but at last we got rid of him; and I heard him ask where Mr Dare lived."

"And we were half afraid," interrupted Philipson, "that he would be here already, for he had a good ten minutes start of us—only, I suppose, he walked slow, and we came very fast, and the short cut."

All this was told in a manner so hurried and confused that Mark had difficulty in understanding it, and, in much surprise, he said—"But what has he to do with me? He cannot call me to account about the marriage."

"You were one of the witnesses," replied Jane; "did you not write your name in the book?"

"And very handsome it is of you to shove it off upon me this way," said Mark. "You are saving yourselves by making me bear the blame."

"If we are, we are doing only the way of the world," said Philipson; "let everybody take care of number one."

He laughed exultingly at his own cleverness, but was checked by Miss Jane, whose principle it was never to confess to selfishness; in her own case she invariably disguised, or endeavoured to disguise it—"That is a foolish way of speaking, Augustus, you know it was not at all our intention to save ourselves at Dare's expense. We took the trouble of coming here, Mark, *this hot day*, to put you on your guard, that you might have your wits about you."

"Wonderfully considerate it was," said Christina; "it is a good thing you admire your own generosity, as no one else may think of it."

Here a modest single knock at the door made all the young people start, and look at each other.

"Here he comes, by Jove!" exclaimed Philipson, looking with some amusement on the puzzled countenance of Mark Dare.

"No, I don't think he would knock in that way," suggested Christina; but she was wrong, for a servant brought in a visiting card, bearing the name, the "Rev. J. Calvert," and a message from that gentleman requesting to see Mr Mark Dare.

"Not at home," said Philipson, in a whisper; but Mark, whose faced had turned very red, looked to Christina for advice.

"No, Mr Philipson," said she, "I'll have no answer of that kind given; show that gentleman in."

"We 'll make ourselves scarce, then," said Philipson; "I 'll be hanged if I stay to be preached to."

"That is very shabby, Philipson," cried Christina; but Mr Philipson paid no regard to the imputation, which was certainly deserved, and he and his sister effected their escape through a side door just as the servant returned, ushering in a prim little elderly man, dressed in a rusty suit of black. He bowed, and Mark and Miss Dare rose. The ill behaviour of the Philipsons disposed them to be more civil to the unwelcome guest than they might otherwise have been, and while Mark offered him a chair, Christina, remarking that he

must have had a hot walk, asked him to take some wine or fruit. Perhaps it was the courtesy of manner, unlike what might have been expected from a young man whom he knew only as scorning propriety in the most sacred place, that suggested to Mr Calvert that he had come to a wrong house, for, declining, politely though rather stiffly, to take any refreshment, he looked inquiringly, and with an embarrassed air at Mark. After accepting a seat, his first remark was, "I am afraid I have made a mistake; if so, I must apologise for my intrusion."

"Perhaps there is no mistake," said Mark; "but if you will state your business, I daresay we shall soon come to an understanding."

"Allow me then to ask, were you at the chapel in —— street last Sunday morning?"

"I was," replied Mark.

"But you may not have belonged to the party I allude to; were you present at a marriage, performed, I regret to say, by myself? But I must explain more fully."

"I believe there is no occasion," replied Mark. "I will not affect to misunderstand you; I was present at that marriage."

They had now come to an understanding. What Mr Calvert said I, of course, shall not attempt to repeat, and it matters little, but I heard afterwards that he explained how shocked he was to find that he had been the instrument of turning a sacred ceremony into a jest, censuring, in severe terms, the blamable levity of the persons who had devised and executed the scheme.

Mark mentioned as an apology that there had been no devising about it; it was a mere thought of the moment. Though disgusted with the meanness of the Philipsons, he did not represent that they had had far more to do with it than he, until Mr Calvert, continuing with unabated severity, his temper began to give way, and too fiery to bear reproof with patience, he at last said—

"You blame me very much, sir, but I had the least to do with it of the party. Sir Lawrence Delafield proposed it himself, and Mr and Miss Philipson left the pew before me, I only followed the others; you would do well to speak to them."

"Sir Lawrence Delafield, I believe, is not at present in Sydney," replied Mr Calvert; "but to Mr and Miss Philipson I should, had I found them at home, as my duty required, have spoken, though it would have been with the consciousness that nothing short of the grace of God could make them see their fault. They have in their parents an awful warning of what sin leads to, and disregarding that, it would be vain to hope that any admonition from me would have a beneficial effect."

At this speech, Christina told me, all Mrs Philipson's qualities, pleasing and the contrary, rose to her mind, and she felt extremely puzzled as to its meaning.

"But," he continued, "at the very time they ought to be bewailing the sins of their father in sackcloth and ashes, they are pursuing a course of folly and deceit which is, happily, seldom paralleled; but from you, Mr Dare, better things might have been looked for. Even if you choose to associate with such people, it might have

been expected that you would endeavour to lead them into your way, instead of falling into theirs."

"Really, sir, I don't comprehend your meaning," said Mark. "Of the sins of their father I know nothing and care less, nor do I see why you should expect me to be so much better than my companions."

"Only that you have had greater advantages of education."

"The advantages of a bush education? I confess I do not see them."

"At all events," replied Mr Calvert, quietly, "they were greater than could be enjoyed by the son of a convict under his father's roof."

"The son of a convict!" Christina and Mark exclaimed at once. "What do you mean? Pray, sir, explain yourself."

The clergyman looked at them a moment, apparently thinking their surprise was not sincere, but seeing, by the expression of unmixed consternation in their faces, that it was so, he inquired, "Is it possible that you were in ignorance of this fact?"

"In total ignorance," replied Mark; "we had not a suspicion of it, and yet we might have had; I remember now receiving a hint, which if I had attended to, might have put me on my guard." Turning to his cousin, "Do you recollect what the boatman at Parramatta said?"

Christina faltered an answer in the affirmative, and Mr Calvert, in a less harsh manner than he had hitherto used, resumed, "I am surprised that you have never

heard this. I believed it to be well known; but as such is the case, perhaps you are not aware, also, that Mrs Philipson, who, I understand, passes herself off in Sydney as a widow, and a woman of respectable connexions, is, at this time the wife of a man who, as the proprietor of a gin shop in Hobart Town, could scarcely be regarded as a very reputable character, even were he not stigmatised as a twice-convicted felon."

The horror of Christina and Mark I can hardly picture to myself; and so sudden and unexpected was the disclosure that I cannot wonder that, after a few minutes' reflection, the latter said, "It is impossible, sir; there must be some mistake. Philipson is in the navy—such a person would not be admitted."

"For that, indeed," said Mr Calvert, "I can scarcely account, but you may rely on the truth of my information; and if you take the trouble to apply at Braham's shop in Clarence Street, you will find that Mrs Braham is no other than sister to old Philipson."

"So that accounts," Christina began, but not concluding the sentence, said, "But Mrs Braham is a Jewess."

"The family, as far as they are anything, are Jews," was the reply, "at least by the father's side. Their proper name is Levi, and it is the mother's maiden name that they now bear."

"But I always understood that Mrs Philipson's maiden name was Aubery," said Christina, "that she was sister to Sir Henry Aubery."

"With Mrs Philipson's private history I am unacquainted; but, without being uncharitable, we may sup-

pose that such a person would not shrink from any assertion, or even entire invention, which suited her purpose. Some of her relations, I am told, have lately come to Sydney."

"Can you tell us, sir, what the relations are?" said Mark. "You must forgive us for being curious."

"I will give you all the information that is in my power," replied Mr Calvert, "but I can tell nothing about the relations, except that they have, I believe, set up a shop of some kind, a repository for old articles, I think I heard, in an obscure part of the town. All these circumstances put together," he continued, "you will not consider my visit an intrusion. You cannot wonder that I should desire to explain how I came to be an actor in the disgraceful scene of Sunday. I thought at the time that I was solemnising a marriage which had been previously arranged. The young man I was expecting, (and for whom I afterwards performed the ceremony,) was about the same age and height as Sir Lawrence, which resemblance misled me; it was a sad piece of stupidity."

"Oh! sir, I don't know why you should say so, you were imposed upon."

"I ought not to have been imposed upon," was the reply. "I am getting an old man, and have had various hints that I am unfit for my office; I see now that it is too true—I must resign."

"Not in consequence of this," said Mark, earnestly. "Any one may make a mistake."

"It is hard," replied the poor, old man, "for I have

no other means of livelihood, and am sincerely attached to several members of my congregation, but it must be."

He laid his hand on the back of a chair, and Christina observed that it trembled. She poured out a glass of wine, and carried it round to him. He looked at her with interest as she presented it. "You had nothing to do with that affair, young lady?"

"No," replied Christina, blushing; "though I am afraid it is not my own prudence I must thank; but, believe me, we were in total ignorance of these circumstances."

"I am sure you were," said Mr Calvert; "I cannot but believe a young lady who is so evidently of a frank disposition. I do not wish to reflect on those who have the charge of you, but I own it surprises me that in a house like this so objectionable an intimacy should be permitted."

On this, both confessed that the intimacy was unsanctioned by the heads of their family; an accident had given rise to the acquaintance, in the first instance, and it was entirely their own fault that it had ever progressed. As a stranger, Mr Calvert said, he had no right to offer advice, nevertheless he would take the liberty of an old man and a clergyman to recommend to two young people, who he thought were capable of better things, to be more careful for the future in the choice of friends, and to remember, that it is impossible to associate with persons of bad principles without learning at all events to think lightly of what is wrong. This little admonition was well received, and Mr Calvert took his leave, very

differently impressed, I should imagine, from when he entered the house.

Nor were the feelings of the Dares less changed; the liveliest sensations of dismay and surprise were excited in their minds, and the fact that the subjects of the discovery were at this very time under their own roof, was no small aggravation. They had not opportunity to speak over what they had just heard before the side-door opened, and Miss Jane Philipson looked stealthily in. "Is the coast clear? may we venture to return?"

"Mr Calvert is gone, Miss Philipson," replied Mark, in a tone which had in it nothing of the familiarity which usually subsisted between them.

"But what an altered tone! What's the matter? Have you seen a ghost, Mark?"

"I have not seen anything," said Mark, looking steadily at her, "but I have heard what has surprised me very much."

A glance passed between the brother and sister, but while Philipson, betraying every symptom of embarrassment, asked no question, Miss Jane, with an air of impudent defiance, said, "So you have heard something that has surprised you, and are you fool enough to believe any lies a prating fellow like that may tell you?"

"Whether or not I have believed lies, Miss Philipson, your countenance answers."

"Read it, then," said she; "you seem to be trying to look me out of countenance, but I can give you stare for stare."

She fixed her bold, bright eyes on his face, with an

expression of such unshrinking audacity, that beyond measure disgusted, and feeling how vain it was to expect any indications of shame from her, Mark turned away. Christina made no effort to speak easily, and the Philipsons unsuccessfully tried to appear free from constraint. Jane awkwardly attempted to rally Mark on his changed demeanour; but after a few minutes, which were probably equally embarrassing to all, she exclaimed, with sarcastic emphasis, "Our friends are so agreeable, Augustus, they make us forget how time flies, we had better be gone; good morning, Miss Dare;" and with a mock swimming courtesy to Christina, and a toss of her head as she passed Mark, Miss Philipson, followed by her brother, quitted the room and the house, in which they never ought to have set foot again, and did not, I am thankful to say, for many weeks.

"Miss Dare," repeated Mark, as the door closed; "by Heaven! I wish it had never been anything else; to think that she has ever been your friend!"

The cousins looked at each other, but neither spoke; both were absorbed in their own reflections. At last Christina said, "How truly did Miss Norris tell us that people never wilfully do wrong without a punishment coming on their own heads."

All this was recounted to me, and I have no doubt of the correctness of the report, but they made me their confidant only on one condition, informing me that they had heard something which they would communicate to me if I first promised, on no account whatever, to repeat it to living soul. Such a promise I for long would not

give, but when they assured me that without it I should hear nothing of the matter, and I might materially assist them by my advice, I consented, and heard the whole story. This is one of the cases in which I do not yet know whether I acted rightly or with my characteristic weakness, though I still think that it was preferable that two young people should confide in some elder person than keep the secret exclusively between themselves. I very strongly urged them to inform Mrs Dare, but this they refused, and reminded me that I was not at liberty to do so either.

By Mr Calvert's information, the truth of which we could not doubt, since he had spoken in the clear, temperate manner of one who said no more than of what he was assured, many mysteries were unravelled, and so disagreeable was the discovery that I yet shudder to think that Miss Dare should have ever been involved with such people. What Mrs Philipson herself was, remained to be seen; that her natural position could not have been what she wished us to suppose was evident, and we puzzled ourselves to account for the acquaintance she boasted among certain English families of distinction. Sir Henry Aubery we guessed to be altogether an ideal personage; the absence of any such name from the baronetage fully sanctioned the supposition, but Mrs Torrington could not be thus easily disposed of, and Mrs Philipson's knowledge of various particulars connected with that lady put it beyond dispute that, in some capacity or other, she had been frequently in her company; on this, also, we trusted being one day enlightened.

The winter was now advancing, and the weather was sufficiently cool to enable us, if we wished, to resume our morning walks, which during the summer were of necessity relinquished; but Christina, who regulated all those matters, preferred occupying herself with her studies in the early part of the day, and postponing our exercise until evening, when Mark could be of the party. A few mornings after this, there happening to be a holiday at his school, they both, at about ten o'clock, came into the school-room, where I was sitting at work, the one with her bonnet on, and the other with his hat in his hand.

"Where are you going, Miss Dare?" said I.

"We are going a voyage of discovery into the town, Miss Norris, to try and find out those relations of the Philipsons Mr Calvert mentioned. Though I don't in the least doubt his correctness, it is as well to have all the evidence we can, and if we find a shop of the description he said, bearing the name, the point will be decided."

"You see," said Mark, "he called it a 'repository for old articles,' now it is dubious what that means; it may be an old clothes' shop," he laughed, but scornfully, "or a curiosity shop, or possibly a pawnbroker's; so we shall have to search all the shops of the three descriptions."

It struck me that a search of this sort was likely to lead them into very strange places, and I did my best to dissuade them, saying that they required no further evidence, what they had already heard being incontrovertible. They, however, replied, that having adopted the

idea they could not rest until their curiosity was satisfied. This was a feeling I could understand, and scarcely condemn, though I wished them to trust to my finding out for them what they desired to know, and said that the simplest way would be to apply at Mr Braham's shop; but they were deaf to my request, and the utmost I could obtain was a reluctant consent to bear them company.

That our walk would prove tedious I had foreseen, and without one clue where to go, ignorant even of whether we were in the right direction, it was certainly on rather a wild goose chase we were bent. The little success that was likely to attend us, however, would have been no concern of mine, were it not that penetrating into all those narrow streets and back alleys, which constituted the lowest part of the town, we laid ourselves open to insult or robbery from some of the worthless characters whose haunts were there, and averse to Christina being exposed in a place so improper, I begged her to return home with me, and leave Mark, if he would not also be advised, to prosecute the search alone.

"I shall certainly consent to nothing of the kind, Miss Norris," replied Christina, "I will continue with Mark; if you dislike being here you have no one to blame but yourself; we did not invite you, for we thought you would get tired;" and putting her arm through her cousin's, she walked on with him in advance of me. With bitterness I reflected how little the recent lesson had corrected her untractable spirit and unsatiable love

of amusement; still I must do her the justice to say, that I believe it was a restless anxiety to find out, if possible, something that should mitigate the supposed guilt of the Philipsons that made her now appear so self-willed. Up one street we went, and down another, often retraversing the same ground, from the idea that we had not inspected every shop; but eager in their curiosity, my companions felt no fatigue, and my complaints of being tired were regarded only as excuses to return. Every instant I dreaded meeting some one we knew, for though it was not a neighbourhood likely to be frequented by friends of Mr Dare's, it is no uncommon thing to fall in with people when you least wish or expect it, and I am by no means sure that we were not recognised, as, to judge by what hereafter befell, I have reason to believe that many of the unbecoming actions of my pupil, which she supposed unknown to any save ourselves, were the cause of her being much talked about, and in a manner particularly injurious to a young lady. On the present occasion what an appearance must it have had! Miss Dare posting along at a rate which left her governess far behind, and that in a part of the town in which she certainly should have had no business. Our endeavour to discover a shop where the name was Philipson proved fruitless, and after spending as I have described a couple of hours or more, Mark began to despair, Christina also expressed an opinion that it might be as well to give it up, at least for that day, and it was almost decided to pursue the investigation no farther, when one of them descried a small by-

street, down which we had not yet explored. The houses here were all of the most shabby description, the air was close and tainted, and the inhabitants evidently only the meanest of the people. At the entrance was a dirty-looking gin shop, and Christina, pointing to its sign, a little painted barrel suspended in the air, said to her cousin, with a scornful smile, "That is what old Philipson (Levi, I mean) has over his door in Hobart Town."

"Horrid old rascal," rejoined Mark; "it would be a joke to hang one over his wife's door; if the house were Philipson's I would: I wonder if they would twig?"

"I should think they could scarcely fail of doing so," replied Christina. "How Mrs Philipson would storm! But, Miss Norris," she continued, turning to me, "you remember that picture Mrs Philipson showed us of her husband, is it not very strange that a man who keeps a spirit shop should have such a pleasing, gentlemanly countenance?"

"What you say is very true," I replied; "the mode of life invariably stamps the face; any person may be handsome, but that countenance is, as you remark, both pleasing and gentlemanly."

The street was quieter than those we had been before traversing, and I was able to collect my thoughts sufficiently to speak.

"It is also strange," I resumed, "that such a person as Mrs Philipson should have a miniature so beautifully painted; I should scarcely be surprised to find that that too is an imposition, and that the likeness is not of her husband at all; for all she says of the resemblance to

some of her children, I have never been able to see any."

"Nor I," said Mark, who, looking at the name over every shop we passed, had not appeared to be attending to our remarks; "I do believe it is a hoax. She says that Jane is so like it, but I have always thought that the two faces are as different as possible, except that they both have fair hair and complexions."

"No, no," interrupted Christina. "Miss Norris, you should not be so suspicious; we have found out enough humbug already, she never would dare pass off another person's picture as the likeness of her husband. But what have we here?" she added, stopping abruptly. "I do think we have found the place at last."

The shop that attracted her attention was one where second-hand garments, and a variety of useless lumber, were exposed for sale. The door was so obscured by old clothes that the full name could not be read, though we saw that the two first letters were Ph——, and Christina and Mark made sure that their trouble was to be at last rewarded.

Before we proceeded to ask questions, it was necessary to purchase something, and Mark glanced round on the variety of rubbish without seeing anything that could be of the smallest use to him; he selected an old china ornament, and asked the price. The person who served us, an unpleasant Jewish-looking female, hesitated a moment, then replied, "Three shillings," but as Mark pulled out his purse, which contained a good deal, she pretended to have misnamed the sum, and called it

eight. The article was not worth as many pence, though the absurdly high value Mark did not regard, but he could not bear the idea of being imposed on, and he said he would pay what was originally demanded, and not a penny beyond. The woman protested he should not have it under eight shillings, and both were getting angry, when Christina whispered, "Pay, and be done with it." Her cousin answered he would do nothing of the kind, he had no notion of being cheated by an old Jew. This home thrust, as might have been expected, incensed the woman, and forgetting all respect for her customer, she poured forth language which quite warranted my dislike to the neighbourhood. Her loud tones reached the ears of persons without, many of whom flocked to hear what was going on, and soon the shop was surrounded by the inhabitants of the adjacent houses, chiefly Jews, several of whom cried, shame on a young gentleman for cheating a poor woman. One tried to snatch his purse, and the rabble, closing in upon us, seemed inclined not to let us escape with impunity. Fortunately, then, when the scene was becoming such as might intimidate a more courageous spirit than mine, and two policemen, attracted by the uproar, were hurrying to the spot, a hackney coach passed, Christina succeeded in hailing it, gained it herself, pushed me in, and signed to Mark. The clothes and person of her cousin bore indubitable marks of his having suffered in the fray, but he elbowed his way through his tormentors, and springing into the vehicle, called to the coachman to drive fast. Thus we made our escape, though for some

minutes the abusive voices of the mob rung in our ears, and until we got clear of the adjoining streets we were all silent.

At length, having gone as far as Brickfield Hill, the driver slackened his horse's pace, and all danger being then over, Mark and Christina threw themselves back on their seats, and laughed heartily. I sat with my veil over my face, and they did not at first attend to me, though, when they at last addressed me, they perceived that I was crying; it was perhaps very weak, but I could not help it. On this occasion, Mark evinced more kindly feeling than Christina, they both looked surprised at seeing me so weak, and, in their opinion, needlessly affected, but while she exclaimed, pettishly, "What nonsense to cry, Miss Norris!" he said, "Come, come, Christina, something has vexed her, let us know, Miss Norris, what it is?"

"Oh, nothing, Mr Mark, nothing," I replied, "just let me alone, I shall recover myself immediately."

But Mark looked concerned, and began guessing all sorts of things.

"Perhaps you lost your purse? did any one rob you?"

"Oh, no, I had not my purse with me."

"Perhaps Christina hurt you when she pushed you into the fly? I saw she gave you rather rough assistance."

He seemed inclined, at the recollection, to go off into another fit of laughter, but checking himself, inquired whether that was the cause of my tears.

"Nonsense, Mark," said Christina, "I know very well what she is crying about."

On hearing this, I drew back and said no more; Mark looked rather puzzled, but turned to his cousin, saying—

"Well, what is she crying for, Christina?"

"Why, she thinks we have behaved so ill, to be sure."

"Oh, Miss Norris," exclaimed Mark, "it is not possible that that is it? You must be accustomed to see us do wrong now," he added, laughing.

"The more accustomed I am to it, Mr Mark, the more every fresh fault must distress me," said I; "and it costs me much to form the resolution I have now taken."

"What is that?" they asked.

"To resign my situation."

The countenances of both changed, but without giving them time to speak, I hurriedly continued—

"Mr Dare returns to-night, I shall speak to him, and tell him, as I ought to have done long ago, that I am not fit for the charge; do not fear that I shall make any complaints to bring upon you his displeasure. When I threatened to inform of your misconduct it was not in anger, but with the hope of getting more authority which would enable me to fulfil the duties I engaged for, but I feel now that I am unfit for the situation, and I shall therefore give it up."

"But, Miss Norris," said Mark, "you think that we have acted very wrongly this morning, and the walk, I

confess, has had an unfortunate termination; but I assure you that when we set out we had no thought of doing any harm, and that has often been the case when we have behaved most ill, we get excited, and carried on to do more than we intended."

"I am quite aware that is the case," I replied; "but the more for that reason you require the guidance of some person whom you look up to and respect, and who, by restraining you from acting on impulse, will give you time to exercise your judgment."

"Oh, no, Miss Norris," said Christina, "don't leave us; I am very sorry for this catastrophe, and I would do anything to please you, rather than that you should go."

"It is not to please me, my dear Miss Dare, that I wish you to do, or not to do anything; I believe that at the present moment you think you could do in future all that is right, but any impression, which affects merely the feelings, must be evanescent, and when young people have no guiding principle, little reliance can be placed on their resolutions."

"And where would you go?" asked Mark.

"I must try and find out where my brother is," I replied, "he has unfortunately lately changed his residence."

"And you would set off by yourself for a strange part of the country," said Mark, "you who are afraid even to walk in Sydney?"

"On my own account I fear nothing," I answered; "my sole reason for giving up my place is that I feel

myself incompetent to take charge of you, the responsibility is too great for me; I am, I know, a very weak character, but when I once clearly see my duty I am generally able to go through with it; it is now my duty to leave your family, and I shall do so. As you may see, it costs me not a little to come to such a decision, for of the kindness I have always received from your parents I am deeply sensible, and for yourselves, in spite of your faults, which I must say are many, I love you both sincerely."

My young friends seemed touched, and with the utmost kindness of manner and tone they endeavoured to change my determination; but I would not allow it to be shaken, and remained inflexible to all their arguments.

Mr Dare returned that evening; he seemed pleased to be again with his family, and the first night of his being at home I did not choose to trouble him with my concerns, but I proposed to avail myself the following day of the five minutes before his dinner hour, when he was always at leisure, to state my intentions; my plans were fixed, and I waited only for this opportunity to act upon them. An event, however, occurred which made it unnecessary.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BROKEN BONES.

"MISS NORRIS," said Albert, entering the school-room, as I was just going out to walk with his sister and cousin, "mamma sent me to say that she does not intend to drive this afternoon, but as the carriage has come round she thinks that you and Christina might go and take this book for her to Mrs Perry's."

"If you are going to drive I'll take myself off," said Mark, and he was leaving the room, but Albert detained him.

"Mamma wishes you to go too. John is engaged, and she thinks, as the young horses are not very well broke, there should be some man besides the coachman."

As we got into the phaëton, I perceived that the horses were rather restless, but for some time we drove along quietly; the house we were to call at was several miles out of Sydney, and we had gone about half way, when the carriage suddenly stopped; the momentary delay was that Mark, who was on the box, might

change places with the coachman, and we proceeded driven by him. This I knew would not do, so speaking to him across the front seat, I begged him to give up the reins, reminding him that his aunt had intrusted us to his care, relying on his prudence, and he ought not to abuse her confidence.

"Lord bless you, Miss Norris! I drive as well as any coachman, I have been accustomed to it all my life."

I was very much frightened, for though aware that Mark drove as well as was possible for any boy of his age, I knew that for certain he would take pleasure in making the horses go fast, and that he had not strength to restrain them should they get excited. He seemed, however, inclined to be careful, and though we went at a quicker pace than before, the horses behaved very well. The road was a good deal retired, and we met very few people, but presently a party of horsemen came in sight; they were yet at a considerable distance, though not so far off but that Mark, who had an eye like a hawk, distinguished his uncle; he could not relinquish his seat without alighting, and there being no time for this he endeavoured to avoid detection by branching off into a side road; he managed the turn, which was an awkward one, successfully, but there was a rather steep descent, for which he was not prepared, and down it the horses dashed at a speed he was unable to check, nor could the coachman give him any assistance. On one side was a frightful declivity, but at the other grass and soft sand. And I proposed to Miss Dare to jump out.

"Are you mad, Miss Norris!" exclaimed Christina, "you will be killed if you do."

And agitated as I was, I could not but feel a respect for this young girl whose self-possession, even in the greatest danger, did not forsake her.

For some moments we proceeded onwards at a furious rate, though Christina said she thought the horses were not running away, only Mark could not hold them in. Perhaps she was right, but there unfortunately was another corner, and round it he could not guide them. What happened then I do not know; there was a crash, and we were upset.

If I was stunned, it was only for a minute, and I recovered myself to see Mr Dare lift from the ground the apparently lifeless body of Mark. But my first thought was for Christina. She was sitting on a stone, seemingly uninjured, though looking very much bewildered. So far relieved on her account, I went towards her.

"Ah, you are safe," said she; "but where is Mark?" She rose, and tried to cross the road to where her father had carried him; but she staggered, and, reseating herself, said, as she pressed her hand to her head, "You go to him."

Mr Dare was endeavouring to restore his nephew; he had procured some water in a hat, and had washed the blood and dust from his face, but it was deadly pale, and he appeared not to breathe. A frightful apprehension took possession of my mind, and I saw that it occurred to my cousin also, when, after using every means within his reach, the unhappy boy remained motionless

and unconscious. As I approached he fell back a few paces, and with a look of despair in his countenance, I heard him say, "He is gone! Good God! how shall I ever tell my brother? He was so distractedly fond of this boy."

These words had just passed his lips, when Mark opened his eyes, and fixed them on his uncle's face with a peculiar and painful expression. It was for not above an instant; he closed them almost immediately, and was again insensible. It showed us, however, that life was not extinct, and Mr Dare exclaimed, fervently, "Thank heaven, he lives!"

Several other gentlemen were present rendering assistance. One of them now stopped the carriage of an acquaintance, and arranged that we should be taken home in it, for our own was much broken, and one of the horses too seriously hurt to go in harness. Mr Dare, it appeared, had recognised his carriage at the time it turned down the lane, and, knowing the horses were unsteady, had ridden forward to warn the coachman not to venture off the main road; following it, he witnessed the accident.

During the drive Mark continued insensible, but Mr Dare galloped on in advance, and on reaching the Pines we found the household alarmed, and a medical man in waiting. The result of the examination was disheartening enough; the doctor feared there was concussion of the brain, and it was, of course, impossible as yet to tell how the case might terminate. Mark was put to bed, and the utmost quiet and watchfulness enjoined.

Christina, meanwhile, in a state of nervous anxiety un-

exampled in her, insisted on remaining in the nearest room, for the purpose of hearing the first report. Having finished his directions about Mark, the doctor spoke to her, and inquired whether she had really escaped all injury. Christina scarcely replied to his questions, and asked after her cousin. He satisfied her as far as his conscience would allow, but added, "What is this, young lady? You are not altogether unhurt, I see." For the first time I then remarked a large bruise, which extended over nearly one side of Christina's face.

"Oh, that is nothing," said she, "but my arm pains me very much. If you have done everything for Mark, and Miss Norris is not hurt, I wish you would look at it."

Her arm was so swollen that she could not pull up her sleeve, and the muslin being ripped open, it was found that the bone was broken. Having been so long neglected, the setting was a more than usually painful operation, but she bore it heroically, nothing but the ashy paleness of her complexion, and the convulsive clenching of her teeth, betraying how severe was the trial.

When it was over, Dr Harrison complimented her on her fortitude, then ordered her to go to bed, and have on a dozen leeches for the bruise on her face.

"No, I won't do that," replied Christina; "I want to stay with Mark."

"You will not be allowed to be with your cousin at any rate," was the reply; and as he began to examine into the extent of the bruise, Christina, turning very

sick, felt the necessity of doing something for it, and reluctantly retired to her room.

As by a miraculous Providence, I had escaped all injury, with the exception of a few immaterial bruises. I offered to take my post by Mark's bed, and, having seen the doctor's orders with regard to Christina fulfilled, for Mrs Dare was too much agitated to be of any use, and, indeed, required attention herself, I established myself in his room.

I paused for some moments at his pillow, absorbed in view of the change which so short a time had effected in his situation—an awful punishment of faults against which he had been so often vainly warned. As still he lay as when first taken up for dead, though a faint colour had returned to his cheek, and as I looked at him, I breathed an earnest prayer to Heaven to spare his life, and not cut him off in the midst of his recklessness and folly. The evening had closed in, and, carefully drawing the mosquito curtains of the bed, that the insects might not annoy him, I seated myself at a small table with a candle and my Bible. I listened attentively for voice or movement from my charge, but not the slightest sound disturbed the stillness of the apartment; and so the melancholy hours wore away. Suddenly, towards midnight, he turned in the bed, and, making a feeble effort to push aside the curtain, said, faintly, "Is anybody there?"

These were the first words he had spoken. How thankful I was to hear them!—the more, that the tone, though weak, was like his usual. Fearful lest any ex-

pression of emotion should excite him, I replied only, "Mr Mark, how do you feel?"

"Oh, I am not quite *bong* this time," was the answer; "but how long is it since it happened?"

"Some hours," I told him.

"Only some hours? I thought it was a week, it seems so long. I see you are all right. Where's Christina?"

"She has got some scratches," I replied, not choosing to risk agitating him with the truth; "nothing material. But you must not talk; the doctor ordered you to be very quiet, and I was told not to allow you to speak."

If not summoned before, the medical man was to call early in the morning. Mark was much more collected than it had been anticipated he would be on awakening, and this was so good a symptom that I felt there was no occasion to disturb the family by reporting of him then; I therefore arranged his pillow, and recommended him to try and go to sleep.

"Not yet," said he; "I have slept enough, and I want to ask you about something that is running in my head. I can't get rid of the idea, though I don't know if it was real or a fancy. When the carriage was upset, and some one picked me up, did my uncle say my father likes me?"

How glad I was that I had heard the words spoken by Mr Dare, and I repeated them to Mark. The boy had always lively feelings, though they had gone much astray, and in his present weak state he was perhaps more sensitive than usual, for he seemed for a moment too

deeply affected to speak, and then, in a low voice, he said—

"Oh that I had known this sooner! You do not know how often I have done wrong for the purpose of annoying him. I thought he hated me, and now I am perhaps dying, and shall never have it in my power to make amends."

Shocked as I was with such a confession, I replied, "We hope and trust you will not die, Mr Mark, and then you will be able to make amends to your father for what is past. God grant that the resolutions you form on your sick-bed may be lasting."

I folded my hands together, and Mark, noticing the action, said, "Is it possible you are praying for such a rascal as I am?"

"I very often pray for you," I said, "but do not call yourself a rascal; I do not like to hear it."

"I am little better, I fear; but do you think there is any use in praying?"

"It is the greatest comfort; do not you find it so?"

"I don't know, I so seldom do pray. I wish I could think there was any good in it."

This doubt was to me more shocking than even what he had before said. His question, however, showed anxiety on the subject, and proved that in his illness, when death was hovering near, he experienced the necessity of comfort greater than the world can give. As he applied to me, I endeavoured, to the best of my poor ability, to point out the numerous advantages of prayer, and the high authority we have for believing in its effi-

cacy. He listened with serious attention, and after I had concluded seemed disposed to continue the conversation; but I thought that this inclination to talk was a sign of his being feverish, and I had been desired, if he was at all restless, to give him a composing draught. I poured one out for him, and when he had taken it, I said, "Now, Mr Mark, if you please I will read you a little prayer, and then I will darken the room, and you must be very quiet."

"Thank you," said he, as I rose from my knees. He appeared calm and easy, and, turning in the bed, was soon asleep.

He awoke after some hours considerably better, and when Dr Harrison called he pronounced an opinion more favourable than we had ventured to hope for. But Mark's return to health could not be speedy; it was necessary to guard him strictly from all excitement, and it was not likely that he would be able to quit his room for many weeks. Christina was doing well, and too restless to remain shut up in her own apartment, she soon appeared in Mark's room with her arm in a sling, and her face very much disfigured by a black and blue bruise. The pain and inconvenience she had to endure was by no means slight; but her own sufferings she took lightly, and as they were unimportant compared to his, she received less general sympathy than she deserved.

I have reason to believe that the period of Mark's convalescence was blessed to them both. He had felt death too near, and she was too sensibly struck with his re-

duced state not to be more inclined to serious thought than I had ever before known them, and many a conversation did we hold on the faults which might be said to have entailed all this. They now also admitted fully their misconduct in pursuing the intimacy with the Philipsons, and owned that the disagreeables in which it had involved them were but a just punishment brought by themselves. Both had the power of reflection, although little in the habit of using it; and in tracing backwards the course of events, Christina found that the origin of her troubles was in the time when she began first to neglect her studies, and disregard advice for the sake of idle companions, while he reckoned from a yet earlier date, proving that his attempts to deceive his tutor at Cangarra, and to conceal his moonlight opossum hunts, had laid the foundation of habits of dissimulation, which had led to consequences so serious and nearly so fatal.

Poor Mark was excessively apprehensive of his uncle's displeasure, on account of the injury to the carriage and horses, and he expected a reprimand for having disobeyed positive injunctions never to drive when his aunt or cousins were in the carriage. Mr Dare visited his nephew each day before he went to his business, and again in the evening, but he never alluded to the cause of the accident, although whenever he came into the room Mark expected him to enter on the subject. For the first few days that nothing was said he seemed to experience a feeling of relief, but soon his impatient spirit, rendered irritable by fever which still hung about

him, began to chafe under the suspense, and one morning, when his uncle was sitting with him, he said, abruptly, "I wish, uncle, you would say whatever you intend to say about the carriage, and be done with it. I know you must be very angry."

Mr Dare looked for a moment surprised.

"Indeed, Mark," said he, "I might perhaps have been very angry had I had less anxiety for your life, and for poor Christina, who, though she has not been in the danger you have, made a very narrow escape; but, compared with your safety, nothing else seemed of importance."

"How very kind you are, uncle," said Mark.

"Well, if you think so," replied Mr Dare, "try, when you have recovered, and are able to go about again, to do what is right; you are not without abilities, Mark, but you have given your poor father a great deal of vexation. I say nothing about myself, although I have been often vexed to see you throwing away advantages."

"But, my father,"—— Mark began.

"Has never shown you much affection perhaps; that is his way, and I think it is the family way. You may see I don't pet my children as some fathers do."

Mr Dare went on to speak of the deep interest his father had in Mark, despite his harsh manner, assuring him that the severe letter he had lately received had been written with pain, and only from a sense of duty; he further related various little circumstances to which he had been witness during his visit to the station,

proofs of how much Mr Henry Dare was wrapped in his son. Mark listened attentively and gratefully, and Mr Dare left his nephew impressed with his kindness in over-looking the injury to his carriage, and strengthened likewise in his good resolutions by the judicious account of his father's regard.

Christina and Mark being now awakened to a conviction of their past faults, became aware that they had many to repent of, apart from those which had led to the present affliction. Not the least of these was their neglect of Albert, who at this time came out in a particularly amiable light, and in the sick-room was of the greatest use. Christina, maimed in one arm, could be of small service, and Mrs Dare's attentions to the sufferer were confined to occasional short visits, when she would bring him some fruit, and inquire if there was anything he fancied that she could order for him, for, really good-natured, she would have been happy to contribute to his comfort in any way that occurred to her; but the idea of taking personal trouble on his account, of giving him her time, never entered her head. The exertion to me, therefore, would have been very great, since I would not have left him to servants, had it not been for Albert. Seeming at once to get the better of the selfishness which had formerly characterised him, as all spoilt children, he showed a uniform and thoughtful consideration for his cousin. When Mark was asleep, he could be trusted to sit patiently and quiet beside the bed, and was always willing to read to him, talk to him, or do anything to amuse him.

Many were the inquiries from Mrs Dare's acquaintances, but none so regular or so friendly as those of the Hills. Mrs Hill begged to know if there was any way in which she could be of use, even offering, though of course that offer was not accepted, to relieve me in attendance upon Mark; and frequently she sent her daughters to cheer Christina, and sit with her in the school-room. Miss Dare's accident pulled her down terribly, pain and confinement to the house reduced her strength, she became thin, and her cheek lost the nice bloom it wore in health. Mrs Hill remarked her look of delicacy, and proposed that she should try change of air, and spend a week with her daughters on the North Shore. Mrs Dare advocated the invitation being accepted, but Christina steadily declined, saying that Mark asked for her nearly every hour, and she could not bear him to be disappointed.

The interest shown for them by this family contrasted markedly with the conduct of those persons who, while the Dares were in the heyday of health and prosperity, had been so much stronger in their professions of regard.

The day following the accident, the Philipsons happened to call. Albert spoke to them at the door, and told them what had occurred,—viz., that his sister was unable to leave the house from a broken arm and severe bruises, and that his cousin lay in a most precarious state. They expressed surprise in a very heartless way, and asking a few commonplace questions left the house, and for many weeks they neither called nor sent a single message of inquiry. It was impossible but that my

pupils should feel this neglect. Determined as they were that all familiar intercourse should cease, they felt that in a similar case they would have behaved differently, and I saw that they were hurt. They however said little about it, though one day, just after Mrs Hill had taken leave, having brought Mark a new book, which she thought would entertain him, he observed—

"How kind the Hills are, and how little they ever professed—how different from the Philipsons, they have not called once."

"They called the day after the accident," I answered.

"That was not to inquire," said Mark; "they have never been since?"

"Not that I know of," I replied, "though, so many people inquire, they may among others."

"But I asked," said Christina; "they have not been here once." Then after a pause she added, "I think Jane might take to herself what she applied to me about friendship, but they are not worth regretting."

It happened to be on the very morning that Mark was well enough to be removed, for the first time, to a sofa in an adjoining room, that a servant informed us Lady Delafield and Miss Philipson were in the school-room, and wished particularly to see Mr Mark and Miss Dare.

"I will go and speak to them," said Christina; "you are not fit to see them, Mark."

"Oh, no, let them come if they wish," replied he "perhaps, seeing to what folly and self-will has brought me, may be of some use to them."

"If you wish it then, I will bring them," said Christina.

And quitting the room, she returned in a moment accompanied by Lady Delafield and her sister. The former entered with a tripping step and insipid smile, and addressed Mark in her usual tone of careless levity; but at the sight of his pale wasted countenance she started, and after a very few words turned away to the window, leaving to her sister the task of condolence. Miss Philipson advanced to the sofa where he lay, and with look and voice of forced interest expressed the deep concern she felt on seeing him so ill. Her protestations of sorrow were coldly received, and she proceeded to apologise for not having been to inquire for him before, affecting astonishment on hearing how long it was since the accident, and declaring that she had heard of it only the previous evening.

"How can that be, Miss Philipson," said Albert; "don't you remember my telling you about it the day after it happened?"

"Oh! I forgot, I don't mean that either, for I am sure you have been scarcely ever out of my mind, and to-day we were so anxious to see you that we put off some very pressing business; we could not rest until we learned how you were—that is, I could not, I can't say my sister, Lady Delafield, showed any great anxiety about it."

Lady Delafield had been taking no part in the conversation, she stood at the window, apparently surveying the garden, until these words from Jane, when Mark

said, "And are you not sorry for me, Lady Delafield?"

"Oh! yes, I am very sorry for you," replied Lady Delafield, and moving forward a few steps, we perceived that her eyes were swimming in tears.

"Thank you," said Mark, holding out his hand to her. "I daresay I shall soon be all right now. I hope Sir Lawrence is quite well?"

"He is quite well," was the reply; "if he had known how ill you were, he would have come to see you before, every day I am sure he would."

Miss Philipson saw that these involuntary tears made more impression than her own elaborate professions; they were seen through and despised, while her sister's silent sympathy was valued. All that was in the power of words she did to convince Mark how much the family had felt for him, how much she in particular had suffered on his and Christina's account. She then introduced a jesting conversation, but for this Mark was not able, and as she did not see that it was out of place, he was obliged to say, "I am scarcely equal to that, Miss Philipson, I fear I am become a very stupid fellow."

Miss Philipson looked half offended, but recomposing her features to what she supposed a suitable expression, observed, "How sad it is to see you so ill; I was exerting myself only to amuse you,—but I am forgetting a little message my brother charged me with. He regretted being unable to accompany us to-day, for his ship is ordered to New Zealand, and he has to be on board this evening."

Much as I disliked the Philipsons, I felt for them now. The war in New Zealand was a source of great anxiety to all who had relations or friends engaged in it, and accounts had reached Sydney of the greatest atrocities committed by the natives. But in a careless tone Miss Jane continued, "We are rather nervous about him going there just at present, for you know the most horrid things are going on; the savages treat their prisoners with barbarity, kill them in a very cruel way, and eat them. I am sure I hope poor Augustus may not fall into their hands."

This was a strange way for a girl to speak of her brother when exposed to such frightful contingencies, but it was not our place to point it out to her, if her own sensibilities were so little alive. The intelligence, however, awoke all Mark's feeling, and induced him to send to Philipson, by Lady Delafield, a kinder message than he might otherwise have thought proper.

This was the first time since his illness that Mark had seen anybody beyond his own family and the doctor. At the conclusion of the visit he appeared excited, and talked to Christina more than was good for him. She, on the contrary, looked pale and exhausted, and seeing that she required refreshment, as much as he needed rest, I proposed to leave him in Albert's care for half an hour, and to take a few turns with her in the garden; she assented, and I observed—

"You looked so well a little while ago, Miss Dare, that I thought we might soon resume our regular evening walks."

Christina smiled as I spoke, and threw a glance at her cousin.

"How glad I am to hear you say so," she said, "it is a proof you intend to stay with us, but Mark and I were sure that after all that has happened you would not leave us. You will believe in the sincerity of our amendment."

"For my part," said Mark, "I should be a brute if, after all you have done for me, I could ever again annoy you."

Since the return of Mr Dare I had been so incessantly occupied, that I had not made up my mind whether or not to persist in my resolution of quitting the family, but after a pause I said, "It was the wild and intractable Mark and Christina I felt it necessary to leave, not the rightly-disposed young people I now speak to, and if you continue as you are at present, if I go it will not be my own choice."

Both expressed satisfaction, and renewed their promises; so it was happily settled that I should remain with them, and, of course, say nothing to Mr Dare of my previous intentions.

Mark at this period did not know of a change in prospect for him, which would remove him, during the principal part of the year, from our society. I was myself informed of the plan, but unauthorised, did not like to communicate it to the young people. There had been lately established, about ten miles out of Sydney, a college for young men from the ages of fifteen upwards, under the superintendence of Mr Hill, who spent there

certain days in the week, and was indefatigable in his endeavours to promote the improvement of the youths. This institution Mr Dare had mentioned to his brother in terms of praise, and it had been arranged between them, that as Mark was making no progress at Mr Berry's, and was older than any of his school-fellows, he should be removed the ensuing quarter to Crag House, where, separated from his present idle companions, it was hoped he would employ his time to more advantage. When Mr Dare acquainted his nephew with the plan, he told him that he must expect to find himself reckoned extremely backward in his studies, but that at first he would be leniently judged, as, on account of his health, close application would not for sometime be required of him. He enforced very strongly the necessity of steadiness and good conduct, and concluded by naming several young men who were doing exceedingly well, affording satisfaction to their friends, and qualifying themselves to follow up creditably the professions for which they were destined, and he expressed a hope that among them Mark might find companions not less to his taste, and less objectionable, than Augustus Philipson.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN INTERVAL OF REST.

I AM now come to a break in my story, and feel as if beginning on a new part. Mark regained his strength sufficiently to go from home at the time fixed, and having received numerous cautions and injunctions from his uncle and aunt, he took up his abode at the college when it re-opened at the end of July, after the midwinter vacation.

And now I enjoyed a space of singular peace. Christina, always clever and entertaining, was, softened by her illness, gentle and companionable; she applied to her studies with the same diligence that she had shown before her acquaintance with her cousin Mark, and gave evidence of her improvement in a variety of ways.

With the Hills we had frequent meetings, an intimacy had sprung up through their visits of inquiry, and Christina was unwilling to let it drop. Not only was she grateful for their kindness and attentions, but she and Louisa had discovered that they were particularly suited for friends. The project of forming a class for drawing, which had been at one time vaguely spoken of, was now

put in practice; the lessons took place twice-a-week, alternately at the Pines and at Mr Hill's, and were a source of very great pleasure. Fanny drew decidedly the best of the three, though they all had a degree of talent, and her proficiency acted as a stimulus to the others. It seemed as if the gift was intended to be a compensation to the poor girl for the delicacy of health which prevented her joining in many of the amusements natural to her age, and often she would promote the long walks both her sister and friend enjoyed, saying, and with truth, that she could occupy herself pleasantly in their absence with her pencil. These rambles we were often able to extend to a greater distance than we should have ventured alone, having an escort in a relation of Mrs Hill's, a young man who had lately arrived from England, and was much at her house. Mr Bernal was five or six-and-twenty, remarkably prepossessing in manner, and agreeable in conversation. He was educated for the bar, and as he had evidently good abilities had every prospect of doing well.

From the day of our first meeting him at Mr Hill's, I fancied he was a good deal struck with Christina's appearance, and, obtaining an introduction to Mr Dare, he was soon on a visiting footing at the Pines. I am by no means penetrating in such matters, yet I could not but remark his attention, as must also Mrs Dare; she let it take its course, without either encouraging it or the contrary. I exculpate her from being a person to lay plots, and her daughter was so young that she would probably scarcely yet think of establishing her.

The sentiments of Christina herself it was more difficult to ascertain; precocious as she was in most respects, flirtation did not appear to occupy her thoughts. That she was pleased with his visits argued nothing, for she was generally animated in company at all to her taste, though I could not help thinking she was particularly so when he was present. Be that as it may, however, she never spoke of Mr Bernal in the light of an admirer.

But though immeasurably improved, there yet were points on which Christina fell far short of what was requisite for her own happiness and the comfort of her friends. The faults she had been for the last year assiduously cultivating were not to be at will dismissed; many existed which would require time, energy, and trouble to cure, and others which ran the risk of remaining uncorrected, as she did not acknowledge them to be faults. Among the latter was one which caused me frequent uneasiness,—a habit she had acquired of supporting strange and erroneous opinions; whatever subject might be broached she was sure to view it in a false light, and to take the wrong side of the question; she did not always mean all she said, but she would support her cause with fluency, maintain that she was in earnest, and frequently, excited by opposition, say even more than she intended. The subject of most of her arguments have escaped my recollection; but one, which she was fond of bringing forward, was the propriety of a woman doing anything that is unobjectionable for a man, and this startling doctrine she one day entered upon to Mr Bernal.

He, for some time, thought she was in jest, and turned it off in ridicule, but when she persevered and would not let it go, he looked rather grave.

"You are not serious, my dear Christina," said Louisa Hill, adding, "You don't know, Mr Bernal, how fond Miss Dare is of frightening her friends with wild opinions, and she supports them so well, or so fluently rather, that she might almost persuade us she is in earnest."

Mr Bernal's countenance resumed its usual expression, and he seemed relieved; but, before he spoke, Christina neutralised the effect of Miss Hill's considerate remark, by turning to her almost angrily, saying, "How can you say so, Louisa; you and I have disputed upon this very question fifty times."

This was but one of the many occasions on which I saw Mr Bernal surprised and annoyed by the sentiments Miss Dare expressed. If he opposed her she defended them the more warmly, and if he said little she supposed he did not differ. To me it was extraordinary she should not see that though there might be occasionally no harm in advocating, for the sake of amusement, the wrong side in a discussion, it was bad taste to do so habitually, or when it could involve a doubt of her principles.

In this respect Christina gave me some uneasiness, but there were many more points in which she was a pleasure and a comfort, and amid the numerous changes which since then have befallen her family and myself, I look back upon this season as one of almost unmixed happiness. But that stage of life in which we enjoy the greatest peace is often the least marked by events, and

this period, which I review with satisfaction, and regret only that it is past, affords me fewer materials for my journal than others in which I suffered daily and hourly vexations.

And so the winter and spring flew by; when the hot weather set in we were forced to relinquish the drawing-lessons, Fanny Hill's delicate health not permitting her to come regularly to Sydney, and Mrs Dare considered it best that Christina should also for a time give them up; but the young friends found too much enjoyment in being together to be debarred by the heat from frequently meeting. The Miss Hills contrived sometimes to spend a day at the Pines, and Christina often went over to the North Shore, where, if she had liked her visits when Louisa and Fanny were her only companions, she appeared to do so doubly now that the party was so frequently enlivened by the presence and animated conversation of Mr Bernal.

CHAPTER XX.

DOMESTIC REBELLION.

AT Crag House there were only two vacations in the year—a short one in winter, and nearly two months in summer. We saw, therefore, nothing of Mark until December, to which period Christina eagerly looked forward. He wrote occasionally to her, and his letters were always in a right tone; this, together with the favourable accounts we received from Mr Hill of his conduct and application, prepared us to find him much improved. Nor were we disappointed; improved he decidedly was, and seemed to have no longer a taste for mischievous frolic. Both he and Christina grew rapidly after their illness, and when I again saw them together, I thought once more how fortunate it was that their follies were laid aside, as they could no longer possibly be excused as those of children.

About the beginning of December the *Sea Serpent* returned from New Zealand, having seen a good deal of fighting, in which both officers and men had behaved with great bravery. In Sydney those who were wounded naturally excited the greatest interest, and amongst the number was Mr Philipson. The war had been attended

with horrors known only among savage nations, but he had displayed a very daring courage, and in a hot pursuit of the enemy he got a ball lodged in his face; until it was extracted his sufferings were acute, and he was still in hospital when Mark Dare returned to the Pines.

Mark was disposed to be quite happy at home with the amusements provided for him, and had no desire to renew his intimacy with Philipson; but his sympathies were awakened on this occasion, and to visit him was only an act of charity.

Mark found Philipson glad to see him—glad of anything to relieve the weariness of his confinement. He never saw anybody, he said. His mother and sisters rarely came near him, or only to sit a few minutes, and say they had no time to spare. He was discontented and out of humour, and Mark took it for granted that his complaints were rather exaggerated; but it happened that while they were speaking Mrs and Miss Philipson entered, and after a few commonplace words to her son, the former observed, "Don't let us frighten you away, Mr Dare, for we cannot remain with Augustus this morning; we have only a minute to spare."

Philipson looked at him, and laughed bitterly, and Mark, convinced that he really was neglected by his relatives, repeated his own visits oftener than he would otherwise have done.

A great deal of attention was bestowed on the officers of the *Sea Serpent*, and, when he recovered, Philipson came in for his share. His name had been creditably brought forward, and he received notice from many

persons who before had known nothing about him. Now there offered to this youth an opportunity to redeem his character, and to establish himself in good society; and as his manners, when he pleased, were gentlemanly, as he possessed readiness in conversation, and much practical cleverness, I doubt not he would have maintained his ground after the *éclat* of his exploits wore off, had he not been foolish enough to throw away his advantages, through the horrible propensity that had originally made Mr Hill eye him with suspicion and dislike. It now brought him to public disgrace.

A ball was given at Government House in honour of the *Sea Serpent*, and Philipson was invited. As I understood, during the early part of the evening he got on remarkably well, though towards the conclusion his frequent visits to the refreshment room had very visible effects. How he could so far forget himself I cannot think, but temptation was in his way, and he could not resist it. After supper, Lady L—— observed him sitting in a corner of the ball-room, almost concealed from view, a situation he had chosen, being unfit for either dancing or conversation. Lady L—— was a very pleasing, agreeable person. Her manners united the dignity and ease suitable to her position with a sweetness that was very winning. Advancing to Mr Philipson, she kindly inquired if he had now quite recovered from his wounds, paying him a graceful compliment on the gallantry that had incurred them. Philipson was not so far gone as to be insensible to what this politeness called for. He rose, intending to express his acknowledgments,

but was unable to stand steady; he staggered, stretched out his hand to grasp a window-frame, missed it, and fell full length at her ladyship's feet in a lamentable state of intoxication.

This *exposé*, of course, got Philipson into serious trouble, and it was only in consideration of his late services that it was hushed over. He escaped with a severe reprimand from his captain, though his name was never again on the governor's list, and no more attention was shown him by society.

With Mark Dare, however, he contrived to make out a good case, artfully representing that his misfortune, and not his fault, had caused his disgrace. He had been so long, he said, on hospital diet, that a very small quantity of wine affected his head; upon his honour, he had taken only a couple of glasses of negus. Mark was good-natured enough to believe him, and in speaking to me he said that if all reputable people drew off from him he would be forced to associate with worthless characters, and thus all chance of his reformation be lost.

Meanwhile I religiously preserved the secret intrusted to me, for Christina and Mark would not absolve me from my rashly-given promise—I suppose from a sentiment of delicacy towards persons who had been their intimate companions, which would not allow them to publish their disgrace. Generous the feeling certainly was, though false, and sometimes I hesitated whether it was not my duty to inform Mrs Dare, but I had been always accustomed to view a confidence made me as very sacred, and considered that, as I had been in-

veigled into a promise, nothing could justify me in breaking it.

The Philipsons at this time were not as a family flourishing. Mrs Philipson had evidently a load of care, she looked positively several years older since her daughter's marriage, and the weight (whatever it was) on her mind, so unpleasantly affected her temper, as to render it at times almost insupportable; accustomed to rule in her own family with a very absolute sway, she had become overbearing and imperious to a degree that I often wondered her children put up with it. Mrs Philipson, however, held the purse-strings, and there are certain arguments to which the most self-willed young people are accessible, especially when selfishness is the basis of a character. Jane Philipson, never amiable or sweet-tempered, took now little pains to conceal her defects; soured by personal disappointment, she disliked any female companion younger and more thought of than herself, but particularly her sister, whom she envied for her marriage, and represented as quite unfit for her present position, at the same time, that she took an absurd pride in speaking about "my sister, Lady Delafield." The influence of the evil passions, nourished by the mother and daughter, could not but be felt by their visitors, and even when they did not disturb the harmony of the circle, a constant irritation was occasioned by the childish disputes of Sir Lawrence and Lady Delafield; married without any real regard, or one moment's thought of the duties they took upon themselves, they were an example of how wearisome life may be rendered by

petty contention, and for want of self-control and mutual forbearance. Mrs Philipson undoubtedly possessed abilities superior to those of any other member of her family, and had she been contented to rule with temper and moderation, her authority would have been beneficial, and probably not disputed. Sir Lawrence, a weak young man, was unfit to guide himself, still less anybody else; and his wife, habituated blindly to obey her mother, was incompetent to decide for herself on the smallest trifle. For Annette, on a not very good footing with her husband, tyrannised over by her mother, and perpetually taunted and annoyed by her sister, I felt, in spite of her faults and follies, an interest; but if there were some things in her situation trying and disagreeable, she certainly aggravated them. If Sir Lawrence was sometimes unreasonable, and often out of humour, she never consulted his wishes in the least, and would frequently oppose him for the mere sake, it would seem, of commencing a quarrel. To the disagreeables in her lot she was fully alive, but quite insensible to there being any fault on her own part, and often she poured forth her sorrows to Christina, sometimes to myself, relating instances of unkindness from her mother and sister, and complaining of Sir Lawrence. These confidences placed us in an awkward position, and while disposed alternately to blame and pity the poor desolate silly girl, we felt the necessity of receiving them coldly. My acquaintance was not sufficient to warrant my speaking frankly, and Christina had too much good sense to choose to involve herself in the quarrels of other people.

Sir Lawrence Delafield had meanwhile been receiving from society that attention which was sure to be bestowed on a young man of his position. He was still living at a hotel, (nominally, at least, for the greater part of his time was spent at his mother-in-law's,) and many persons had called upon Annette, who never would have noticed her but as his wife. They had gone through the usual routine of dinner-parties and balls, and now that the season was drawing to a close, they felt desirous of making some return. Not having an establishment of their own, they could not entertain in the ordinary way, but pic-nics were rather in vogue, the weather was agreeable, and a party of that description, Sir Lawrence and Lady Delafield determined to give. Cards were accordingly issued, and a very comprehensive invitation was received at the Pines. Mr Dare was himself unable to spare leisure for morning amusements, and Mrs Dare had a peculiar aversion to the water. The excursion was to be a boating-party as far as Paraquet Point, very agreeable, she was sure, for young people, but not what would suit her. As, however, there was every reason to suppose the party would be properly conducted, and several ladies of her acquaintance had accepted, the final arrangement was that I should chaperon Miss Dare, and Mark accompanied us. Sir Lawrence requested the answers to be sent to his mother-in-law's house, whither they were conveyed by Mark, who brought back an account of a scene he had been unfortunate enough to witness, that very much amused Christina, and disgusted me. It has nothing to do

exactly with my story, nevertheless it follows so *apropos* the remarks in the last page, and illustrates so forcibly characters who figure in this narrative of facts, that I shall take the trouble to insert it.

"We had such a row at the Philipsons' to-day," said Mark; "by Jove! a regular blow up!"

"Oh! tell us about it," said Christina, "I want something to amuse me."

"Well, when I went there, Mrs Philipson was in a great stew about a letter she wanted copied; she had the blight in her eyes, and could get no one to write it for her. Jane tried to put it off upon her sister, but Mrs Philipson said Annette wrote such a wretchedly bad hand she would never be able to read it, and she applied to Delafield. 'He never took a pen in his hand,' he said, 'when he could help it.' The poor woman was rather ill-used among them, and she said to me, 'Is it not very disobliging of Jane, Mark, that she won't copy this letter for me? it has to be ready for the post, and it must be copied.' 'It could be no trouble to copy it,' I said. 'No trouble, indeed,' exclaimed Jane, 'to copy a letter four pages long, I wish you had it to do yourself.' I said I should have no objection, and Mrs Philipson took me at my word. 'Ah! if you would be so good, Mr Mark, you write so beautifully.' And before I knew what I was about I was set down to her desk."

"What a shame," interrupted Christina.

"I thought myself sold," replied Mark, "but she, poor woman, really looked very ill. Part of what I am going to tell you I heard while I was writing, though I was

often obliged to stop, they made such a commotion."

He proceeded with his task, he said, some little time quietly enough, until Jane, who was standing near the window, exclaimed, "There is an orderly at Mrs Wright's —a ball at Government House, no doubt."

"Oh, how nice!" said Annette; "I hope we shall be asked."

"Of course we shall," replied Jane. "How lucky it is we wrote our names last week; and here he comes, and he is leaving two cards."

"You see, Delafield," observed Mrs Philipson, "I was quite right that it was proper for Jane to write her name at Government House."

The servant, on entering the room, delivered both notes to Sir Lawrence. One, which evidently contained a card of invitation, he tossed to his wife.

"The other is for me," said Jane.

"Indeed, it is no such thing," was the reply.

It was a few lines from the aide-de-camp, asking him to join a boating party. The former invited Sir Lawrence and Lady Delafield to a ball the first of the ensuing month.

Miss Philipson was excessively angry, and her mother, forgetting for once her usual propriety of manner, despatched a messenger after the orderly to inquire whether there was not another card for that house. An answer in the negative was returned.

"It is an omission," said Mrs Philipson, with a dignity that contrasted with her daughter's irritation, "and it

will no doubt be easily remedied. As you are to see the aide-de-camp to-morrow, Delafield, you can mention it."

"Mention what?"

"The omission."

"I don't suppose it is an omission," replied he.

"It must be," said Mrs Philipson. "At all events, you can have no difficulty in procuring an invitation for Jane."

"I shall do nothing about it, I promise you," said Sir Lawrence. "I have already done too much in letting her write her name with my wife's; it was against my wishes she did that."

"But I am sure you would be sorry to cut your sister out of this amusement," said Mrs Philipson, and she continued to urge her point,—though aware that her son-in-law, like many weak people, took fits of obstinacy if he thought himself opposed,—at first gently, but, finding him impersuadable, her domineering temper got the better of her judgment, and, in the tone of authority she was in the habit of using with her own children, she said, "Really, Delafield, I am surprised that you make so much opposition. I insist on your doing what I desire."

"Don't begin that way of speaking to me," retorted Sir Lawrence, angrily, "for I won't stand it. It is well enough for you to bully your own children, if they like it, but remember that, though I've married your daughter, I am not your son."

This undutiful speech, although she had brought it

upon herself, quite startled Mrs Philipson. Perhaps she viewed it as the presage of a general rebellion, and Annette, who of the whole party stood most in awe of her mother, said, "O Lawrence! don't speak in that way to mamma."

"Why should you interfere, you little goose," was his answer.

Mrs Philipson, ready to wreak her anger upon any one, exclaimed, "Don't call Annette names, Sir Lawrence; she is no goose, and only a great deal too good for you."

"If she is too good for me," he replied, "I'll leave her upon your hands, and be off home."

Annette looked frightened. "If you go to England I'll go too. I won't be left; it would look so odd."

"If that is all you care about," said Sir Lawrence, "it is clear you will be happier at home, so I shall certainly go. A pretty business I have made of it!—taken in to marry a silly girl, who does not care a straw about me!"

"But I do care about you; I like you very much," said Annette. Then, turning to her mother, she continued, "Mamma, you can't expect Delafield to do as you bid him the way we do."

Mrs Philipson for once seemed indecided, but Jane chimed in, recurring to the subject of the invitation, and so violently attacked Sir Lawrence, that her mother, seeing in another how injudicious it was to urge him, exclaimed, imperiously, "Be silent, Jane!"

"But, Lawrence," resumed Annette, "will you believe me?"

"Yes, yes, child, only don't bore; let's go out, Annette, and try those horses; I'm sick of this."

Jane took no notice of their departure, and began to reproach her mother. "Be silent, indeed! Delafield was quite right to object to that way of speaking. I wish you would drop it altogether; and he won't do anything about the ball; you have mismanaged it."

"You mismanage everything," said Philipson, at that moment entering, in extreme ill-humour. "A pretty scrape you've got me into now! You sent me down the town, after I told you I got leave of absence only on the excuse of being ill, and I met the captain, and he said that if I was well enough to walk about, I was well enough to do my duty, and ordered me on board immediately."

Unusual as it was to see Mrs Philipson lose her self-possession, on the present occasion she was overpowered; agitation, too excessive to be concealed, was in her countenance, as she said, "My children are all against me."

"What has been going on here?" asked Philipson of his sister. "I met Delafield looking as black as thunder, and Annette half crying."

"Oh, nothing, but that mamma ordered him to do something as she is accustomed to dictate to us, and he told her he would not stand it, and I have told her so too. I shan't submit any longer as I have done."

"We have submitted to be bullied too long," said Philipson; "from henceforth I shall be my own master."

For one moment Mrs Philipson seemed struck with

consternation. Her authority, which had never before been disputed, was thus suddenly, openly, and decidedly thrown off; the power she had so long maintained was in an instant wrenched from her grasp, and in the anguish of discovering her children combined against her, she perhaps paid the first penalty of her sins; the first, do I say?—no, for that had been paid long since—paid in the constant anxiety which dreaded detection, in the load of secret care which had set its signet on her brow and streaked her hair with gray, and in the remorse which, notwithstanding her placid exterior, was, I am convinced, as a canker-worm at her heart. Successful as had been many of her schemes—apparently prosperous as was all around her, I doubt not that even in the flush of pride and exultation, she has felt that worldly triumph is no exchange for peace of mind, and often pondered on whether the lowliest walk of virtue and sincerity does not afford more happiness than such a course as hers. But to resume. She soon recovered herself, and the shock was a stimulus to her energy.

"Let me understand," she said, calmly. "Are you in earnest in saying that you wish from henceforth to manage your affairs for yourselves?"

"Yes," answered Philipson; "you order me about as if I was a child; I 'll have no more of it."

"And I," said Jane, "will please myself."

"Very well," said Mrs Philipson, "so be it. For you, Augustus, I hope you will not be inconvenienced by the withdrawal of the allowance I have been in the habit of giving you, as I can do so no more, nor can my house

be any longer a home for you; indeed, I shall not retain a house in Sydney; if you, Jane, have friends to receive you, you can, of course, go to them, if not, you may accompany me to Hobart Town; I shall take my passage in the first vessel."

"And live at the ——" Jane began, and stopped abruptly, glancing at Mark.

"Yes," replied Mrs Philipson, with composure, "it was for your sakes I left it, for you I have been living at an expense I can ill afford, and for your establishment I have pursued the means which seemed to me best; with Annette I have succeeded, and with you I should also, but for your own perverseness; I hope, however, that, as your own mistress, you will manage things better."

Philipson and Jane both looked much disconcerted, but, after sulking for a few minutes, the latter said, "Well, well, let things remain as they are."

"And say no more about it," added Philipson; "we will go on as we have done."

He prepared to leave the room, and Mark at the same time rose to go, but Mrs Philipson interposed. "Resume your seat, if you please, Mr Dare; I have no secrets. I wish everything in my family to be perfectly open. Augustus, remain. If," she continued, "I consent to go on as we have done, I must have a more entire submission. With what you have said I cannot be satisfied, for to remain here and be subjected to a repetition of this scene, is what I will not endure."

Jane would not make a gracious concession, but too

much was at stake, and, scowling and grumbling, she said, "I'll give you my promise."

"Your promise to be as docile and obedient as formerly?"

"I suppose there is no help for it," was the reply; "yes."

Mrs Philipson turned to her son, "And you, Augustus?"

"Oh! I was only in jest," said Philipson; "I'll give you my oath, if you like."

"Give me your hand upon it," said Mrs Philipson, holding out hers.

They shook hands gravely, and the same ceremony having been gone through with Jane, the mother's authority, so far from being weakened, was strengthened by the attempt to throw it off.

"What a set they are," observed Christina, as soon as her cousin had finished his account; "but I wonder they would hold such a discussion of family matters before you."

"She wanted me to be witness, I suppose," said Mark, "in case they should be inclined to break their promises. It was an odd business."

"Jane's remark 'live at the——'" resumed Christina, "was corroboration of the existence of the gin-shop; she no doubt alluded to it. Poor Mr Calvert was quite correct in what he told us, except about Mrs Philipson having a husband alive; I think I don't believe that; she must be a widow."

"I believe she has a husband alive in Hobart Town," said Mark.

"Do you think Sir Lawrence knows what they are yet?" asked Christina.

"Oh, no! I should think not; depend upon it he would never go near Mrs Philipson's again if he did. He and Annette have been here to-day, haven't they?"

"No, not to-day. Why?"

"I met him driving his wife close to the house, and I thought they had perhaps been calling. His carriage is a very stylish affair; he has got new horses, the handsomest pair in Sydney."

"He bought them just before you came home," replied Christina, "and paid, I believe, a great deal for them. Sir Lawrence is living at a great rate, a good deal too fast, I am inclined to think."

Remarks on Sir Lawrence's extravagance were not confined to my pupils; very common were they in Sydney; and that they were well founded was in a few days proved, for the next thing we heard was that he had been arrested for the payment of these very horses, and was then in prison, Annette having meanwhile gone to her mother, who, it was said, received her very reluctantly, and refused her son-in-law's request to advance him money. He was in daily expectation of remittances from England, and in declining to accommodate him, she gave as her reasons his undutiful conduct a few days previous.

It became a subject of conjecture with Christina and her cousin what was to be done about the pic-nic. There seemed little likelihood that it could take place, and there was an awkwardness in applying for information

to the family. They appealed to me. The only advice I could give was to wait patiently, do nothing, as, if it was to be put off, Lady Delafield would no doubt let them know in time. To do nothing they agreed, but to wait patiently under any doubt was not in their natures, and they proposed to walk along the Wooloomooloo Road, where they might perhaps encounter some of the Philipson party, who would probably volunteer some information. To this I saw no objection, and, as in former days, we went out to walk together.

Near the gate of Mrs Philipson's garden was lounging a shabbily-dressed old man, who looked at us in a very inquisitive way. His singularly disreputable appearance and unpleasant manner gave rise to the observation, "What a blackguard-looking old dog!" from Mark.

"A Jew, into the bargain," added Christina; "and how impudently he stared at us."

We proceeded as far as the Point, and on our return again met the man. Mark told his cousin to prepare for another stare, but before we got quite up to him he turned into Mrs Philipson's grounds, and strolled leisurely down the avenue.

"What can he be doing there?" asked one of my companions; "he can't be a beggar, he seems so independent."

"Oh! one of the Braham tribe, come with a message."

We did not fall in with any of the Philipsons, and Mark, having a commission to execute, quitted us to go into the town. In the drawing-room we found Mrs and

the Miss Hills, sitting with Mrs Dare. Christina expressed pleasure at seeing her young friends, and seated herself by Louisa. The greetings over, the elder ladies resumed their conversation,—they were speaking of their gardens. Mrs Hill had brought a basket of very fine strawberries as a present to Mrs Dare, who regretted that that fruit would not grow at the Pines.

"It is the only thing," said she, "for which I should like to live on the North Shore; the gardens certainly are finer. I suppose you preserve a portion of your strawberries?"

"I intend," replied Mrs Hill, "but I have not got the gathering over yet, my children have promised to devote a morning to it this week."

"Rather a labour of love, I think, gathering strawberries," said Christina to Louisa.

Mrs Hill overheard the remark, and said, smiling—

"Do you think so, Christina? then I must press you into the service."

"Oh, I shall be delighted," said Christina, crossing the room to Mrs Hill.

"If it is a very hot day you may not find it delightful," said Mrs Hill, "but I must not let you escape after offering. I shall take you at your word, and when you have worked well, you shall refresh yourself with strawberries and cream à l'Anglais."

Christina declared that in so good a cause she should not mind the heat; especially with the inducement Mrs Hill offered, she was sure she should like it. The day but one following the projected pic-nic was fixed, and

the invitation was extended to me and to Mark, if he cared to join the party.

Christina resumed her seat between Louisa and Fanny, and presently I heard her mention, in a low voice, the report of Sir Lawrence Delafield being in prison, and inquire whether they knew anything of his chance of being released. Louisa replied that she did not, though her mother perhaps might. Christina said she would ask Mrs Hill; but while she was watching for an opportunity to introduce the question, Mrs Dare went direct to it.

"You are acquainted with Sir Lawrence Delafield? I suppose you have heard the strange report that he is in prison?"

"I believe it is true," replied Mrs Hill; "I am not personally acquainted with Sir Lawrence, but Mr Bernal knows him very well, and he mentioned it, saying it is such a vexatious circumstance."

"It is a very vexatious circumstance," said Mrs Dare, "for Christina and Mark are engaged to a pic-nic with them, and we don't know whether it will now take place."

"Ah, indeed," said Mrs Hill, "if he is not released you will, I should think, receive a note from Lady Delafield. But the letters of the *Palmyra*, which came in this morning, are not distributed yet. And I see there is another English vessel signalled, so perhaps he may be relieved."

"Very likely, for he said he was looking for remittances," said Christina. "I hope he may, the pic-nic will be very nice."

"I hope so too, my dear," replied Mrs Hill; "pray who are to compose your party?"

"None that I know very well, except the Delafields and Philipsons," replied Christina. "I wish Louisa and Fanny were going."

"Lady Delafield is not your only chaperon; I hope?" said Mrs Hill, smiling; "if I am not mistaken, she is very young."

"Judge and Mrs Lancefield are to be there," replied Christina, "and Mr and Mrs Milner."

Mrs Hill seemed satisfied, and observed—

"Then I should think you will have a very agreeable party, Mrs Lancefield is a particularly nice person."

A few days after this our doubts were put to rest. In a walk we met Miss Philipson, who, as though nothing had happened, said—

"Be sure you are punctual to the hour to-morrow, remember you come to our house. Delafield, I believe, intends calling at the Pines this afternoon."

This speech, we conjectured, was not made without an object, and we saw from it that he was released.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DELAFIELDS' PIC-NIC.

SOME of the party were to go in boats, and the rest, those who disliked the water, to drive in their own carriages. Christina and her cousin preferred the former; and when at the appointed hour we went to Mrs Philipson's house, which had been fixed upon as the rendezvous, being a convenient point from whence to start, we found two boats in readiness, moored below. The Delafields, whom we expected to find there before us, were not yet arrived, and we were shown into a vacant drawing-room, though of Mrs Philipson's vicinity a very few seconds made us aware. In an adjoining room she was holding a conversation, in tones so unlike her usual gentle, lady-like accents, that it seemed at first unjust to attribute them to her. She was evidently very angry, and urgent about something, although an apparent fear of being overheard imposed a certain restraint. A man's voice was answering her, and while it was natural to suppose this belonged to a domestic, there were circumstances which rendered it, to say the least, doubtful: first, Mrs Philipson did not habitually keep a man-

servant, and, secondly, he was speaking with a disrespect which few ladies would bear from a menial.

"What do you think she is about?" said Mark, whispering to me.

"I think she is scolding her servant for having broken something," I replied. "I heard her say, 'You will destroy everything.'"

But the next words we caught made against my surmise that she was reproving her servant for carelessness. "Not now," she was heard to say; "another time, when you are dressed; go, I will have it."

The man's reply was distinctly audible.

"Humph! perhaps my dress is not just the thing, so you may have it this time; but it shall be the last, depend on it."

Then followed the shuffling of feet towards the door, both emerged into the passage, the man retreated, and Mrs Philipson entered the drawing-room. A start, which was evidently affected, was the prelude to the inquiry, "How did you contrive to get in without my knowledge? I have been down in the avenue looking for you."

This falsehood was too palpable to be received with the complaisance of good breeding, and I did not think the worse of either Christina or Mark for the glance of scorn they each involuntarily threw upon her. If she saw it, she dared not resent it, and she was in such an unaccountable state of flurry that she scarcely uttered two sentences connectedly, fidgeting about the room, now going herself to the door to look for her son-in-law's phaeton, and from time to time glancing restlessly

between the blinds into the garden. Christina, politely wishing to be no restraint upon her, allowed the conversation to drop, and took a seat in a window which overlooked the garden.

"Are you not afraid of the draught, my dear Miss Dare?" said Mrs Philipson.

"Oh, no; I enjoy the breeze," replied Christina; "but I think I will go into the garden and look for Jane."

"Jane is dressing," said Mrs Philipson quickly, "and I advise you not to fatigue yourself by going into the garden just now."

Christina retained her seat, and Mrs Philipson tried not to appear discomposed. She was engaged with Mark at the further end of the room, when Miss Dare made a sign to me to join her; without speaking, she directed my attention to a certain part of the garden, where, lounging about with very much the air of being at home, was the identical old man on whom, two days before, we had remarked, struck by his impudent manner and unpleasant appearance. He was dressed in a kind of shabby déshabille, and, at the moment I looked at him, was in the act of selecting the finest peaches from a bough he held down for that purpose, and, eating them as he strolled along, he threw the stones negligently about the path.

It was impossible to make any remark, but I was not less surprised than she could be. As we stood together Miss Philipson came out of a side-walk, and spoke to him, and, the window being open, we distinctly heard him say, "Run into the house, Jane, your playmates are come."

Jane in a few minutes entered, and Christina, with a curiosity I could not blame, my own being nearly as great, asked whom she had spoken to.

"I? I did not speak to anybody."

"Yes, you did," said Christina, "to an old man in a dressing-gown."

"Oh, I spoke to the gardener," was the reply; "to no one else."

"But does your gardener call you Jane?" asked Christina.

"*Miss* Jane he called me," replied Miss Philipson; "but how tiresome you are, Christina. Why should you ask so many questions?"

Sir Lawrence's carriage was now seen approaching the house, and Mrs Philipson, apologising that his horses were young, and would not pass through the garden gates, told us it would be best to join her daughter as she alighted.

"I will not detain you," she said, bidding us adieu in a very hurried manner, and literally she almost turned us from the room.

This strange conduct would, at another time, have given rise to much wonder with Christina and Mark, but, unusual as it was to see Mrs Philipson otherwise than placid and composed, in the bustle of taking our places in the boat it was forgotten.

Mr Philipson had got leave of absence for the day, though not, we heard, without difficulty, and having given his promise to return on board the same evening.

Paroquet Point is a considerable distance down the

harbour, and the row to it was very pleasant, though the beginning more so than the latter part, for the sun, which at first was obscured by clouds, burst out with all the heat of an Australian summer day.

At length we reached the landing-place, and there we found awaiting us a highly-respectable-looking man-servant, who had been sent forward by Sir Lawrence to make the necessary preparations for dinner. He had lighted a fire for the purpose of dressing the fish which were to be caught, and said that he had selected a spot where, if it was approved, he would lay the cloth. The first thing to be done was to visit it, and it was pronounced convenient in every respect, being on one side sheltered by trees, and on the other commanding a fine view of the water.

Brown received directions from his master, and this was just settled when a party of gentlemen rode up, followed almost immediately by an open carriage containing Mrs Lancefield, whose husband, though still what may be called a young man, was one of the Judges of the Supreme Court; a very pleasing-looking young lady, her intimate friend, Mrs Milner; and, a person we had not expected, Mr Bernal. And very imprudent it was of him to be present, for he had sprained his ancle, and was ordered by his physician to remain in a reclaiming posture. But Mr Bernal wished to go to this pic-nic, and, at the risk of being laid up afterwards, had made interest with Mrs Lancefield for a seat in her carriage. She took him only on the condition that he would submit to be an invalid, and make no unnecessary exertion.

Sir Lawrence and Lady Delafield received their guests, the former in an easy, gentlemanly manner, and the latter with a pretty, simple air, which disarmed criticism. She was slightly acquainted with both the ladies, they having called upon her soon after her marriage, and she took an early opportunity to introduce her sister. As she pronounced the name of Miss Philipson, I thought I saw surprise, blended with annoyance, in the countenance of Mrs Lancefield; it was but momentary, however, and her bow, though distant, was civil.

After seeing the seine, as they called the net, once drawn, I found it too hot to stand longer on the beach; so, while Christina remained to witness the second haul, I walked to a sheltered spot where Mrs Lancefield and Mrs Milner were resting on a fallen tree. They were kind enough to offer me a seat, and entered into conversation with me. Very agreeable I found them, and we continued sitting together until informed that dinner was ready.

As we took our seats round the well-spread cloth, a specimen of the squabbling usual between Sir Lawrence and Annette threatened to disturb the harmony of the repast.

"What shall I help you to, Lady Delafield?" said Judge Lancefield.

"Oh, nothing," was the reply, "until I get something to drink, I am so thirsty."

"That comes of standing so long in the sun," called out Sir Lawrence, from the other end of the rural table; "I told you not to do it."

"Did you order the cold tea to be put up, Delafield?" asked Annette; "I daresay you forgot."

"That I did,—never thought of it again."

"How tiresome! you forget everything! and you promised."

"Well, it can't be helped now; you must rough it for once on champagne, Annette."

"But I hate wine; champagne gives me a headache, you know it does."

"You had better have stayed at home, Annette, than make yourself so disagreeable," observed Sir Lawrence.

"Me stay at home, Delafield! Why, it is my party."

"Don't be so cross, then, or we shall be glad to let it be somebody else's party."

Before Annette could recriminate, for the presence of strangers was no check on either, Brown came forward, saying, "There is tea, if your ladyship wishes it."

"But it is hot?" said Annette, pettishly.

"Hot or cold, whichever your ladyship prefers," replied Brown in the most respectful manner.

"Bravo, Brown! you are a brick!" cried Philipson. Mr Milner turned his eyes upon him, and Philipson was silent.

The superior tone of Mrs Lancefield's party did much towards maintaining *retenue*. The Philipsons were a good deal under restraint, and they were all the better for being kept in awe. Mr Bernal was, as usual, cheerful, and agreeable to every one, yet it was evident to me that his thoughts were mostly with Christina. There was something in his manner of listening whenever she

spoke which proved his interest in her; once, on Miss Philipson calling familiarly across the table-cloth, "I say, Christina Dare!" he perfectly started. He seemed also weighing every word she said, in a way that was not altogether fair, considering how unconscious she was of being so observed, and that in high spirits, and talking fast, she uttered many things without reflection.

The appointments of the luncheon were all, I believe, very correct, at least I heard one of the gentlemen say so, and when the more substantial part of the viands had been removed, that the servants might dine, Judge Lancefield observed, "That is a capital servant of yours, Delafield, he has made his arrangements in great style."

"He has a great notion of doing things in style," replied Sir Lawrence. "When I was ordering the prog I gave directions that forks and spoons should be furnished also, but Brown said, 'It will be quite a common affair, sir, unless you take your own plate,' and insisted on getting it from the bank, where I had it all packed away."

"Did he?" said Mr Milner, distrustfully. "Whom did you get his character from?"

"Why, I can't say that I got a character with him at all, except from himself," replied Sir Lawrence, carelessly. The other gentlemen laughed. "He is an emigrant, and he thinks himself greatly superior on that account to those who come out the 'regular way.'"

"Emigrants are not always so much better than the ticket-of-leave men," observed Judge Lancefield; "they soon pick up the tricks of the old hands. And when a

very finished servant, like that man of yours, comes to take his chance out here, there is often some reason why he could not retain good situations at home. I advise you to keep your eye on that fellow, he may prove too sharp for you."

"He won't prove too sharp for me, I'll answer for it," returned Sir Lawrence, in a tone of pique.

Presently Jane Philipson drew our attention to a large vessel which, with all her sails spread, was passing through the Heads.

"That is the *Calypso*," observed Sir Lawrence; "beautiful accommodation she has; I was half inclined to go in her myself, but Lady Delafield said she could not get ready on such short notice."

"Are you thinking of going home already, Sir Lawrence?" asked Mrs Milner; "it seems as if you have only just come out."

"It is not quite a year since, but that is long enough for this colony, and I was a great fool ever to come out."

"Well," remarked Judge Lancefield, "your position, to be sure, is rather different from that of most young men who come to this colony, but to the generality Australia affords openings which the overstocked professions of England can offer nothing like. I should have reason to be very sorry, I know, if at your age I had given up my prospects here. This colony has a future, England has none."

"But it is not every one who gets so much fish as has come to your net," interposed Philipson, pertly.

"And in a year or two, I suppose, we shall have to

call you 'Sir Charles,'" added Miss Philipson, as usual attempting to make a good impression.

The remark was forward enough, though prophetic, for not long after this Mr Lancefield, whose brilliant talents were distinguished both in the legal profession and the Legislature of the colony, had a baronetage conferred upon him.

"The mistake I made," resumed Sir Lawrence, "was in not going into the army. I should have liked a hussar regiment, the uniform is handsome, and the life would have suited me."

"Oh, yes, it would have been so nice to have you in uniform," said Annette; "but perhaps it is not too late yet, you can enter the army when we go home."

"You want to send me to be shot at, as your brother was in New Zealand," said Sir Lawrence, "and be a grass widow while I am laid up in the hospital."

"Lady Delafield is all for glory," observed Mr Bernal.

"Oh, yes," was her reply, "I am sure Delafield would make a hero; and if you were wounded, Lawrence, I would nurse you so carefully."

"Nonsense, child, I wish you would not chatter so much about what you don't understand."

I am sure I don't know why I note all this desultory small talk, for it certainly is not worth the trouble, but I find that my ideas flow the more clearly when I write down the scene as it rises to my recollection. The allusion to New Zealand turned the conversation to the war, a subject of interest to every one, and on this topic Philipson showed to some advantage; as having been

an eye-witness, he was appealed to, and speaking, not boastfully, of what he had seen, he really appeared well; but the ground her brother thus gained, Miss Philipson more than lost. With a view to her object of raising herself in society, she made up so very openly to Mrs Lancefield that that lady treated her with marked coldness. Flattery Jane supposed a sure passport to favour, and not baffled by former failures, at the end of luncheon she ventured on so bold a push as quite disgusted Mrs Lancefield, who almost immediately afterwards remarked that the sky was overcast, as an excuse to withdraw.

"I am sorry to be the first to propose leaving so agreeable a party," said she, "but it looks so like rain that I am anxious to get home. Emily," addressing Mrs Milner, "I think it will be only prudent to move."

Mrs Milner assented, and Mrs Lancefield said to Christina that she supposed she would not be long of leaving also, there was certainly to be a storm of some kind. Christina replied that she was dependent on Lady Delafield.

After a moment's hesitation, Mr Bernal said, "You are leaving so very early, Mrs Lancefield, will you not be prevailed on to remain a little longer?"

"No, Mr Bernal," replied Mrs Lancefield, "I cannot remain longer; both Mrs Milner and I object to getting wet."

"Oh, perhaps it is only prudent for you and Mrs Milner to escape the risk of a wetting," said Mr Bernal, "but I see a good hour's amusement here yet, so I shall not desert at present, and go home in one of the boats."

"But consider, Mr Bernal," expostulated Mrs Lancefield, "you promised Dr Harrison to return in my carriage; he spoke rather seriously of the harm you would do yourself by exertion, and you certainly walk lamer than you did this morning."

"You are unwarrantably rash, Bernal," said Judge Lancefield; "an hour's amusement is surely not worth the risk of being laid up for weeks."

Mr Bernal could not refute this, but he seemed still indecided.

"And, Miss Dare, my dear," resumed Mrs Lancefield, "I think your mamma will be uneasy if you are out late, will you allow me the pleasure of taking you home?"

Mr Bernal brightened up, seeming relieved by the offer, but Christina's reply was, "Thanks, Mrs Lancefield, but I never take cold by being out late, and I would rather return as I came."

Mr Bernal went round to where Christina was standing, and in a low voice, said, "I think, Miss Dare, that when Mrs Lancefield is gone the party will become very noisy and racketing, would it not be better to accept a seat in her carriage?"

"You advise me to do so," said Christina, "and at the same time hold out to me the greatest possible inducement to remain; there is nothing I enjoy so much as noise and racket."

This reply caused evident vexation and disappointment to Mr Bernal. Neither he nor Mrs Lancefield, however, pressed her to change her mind, and the car-

riage being in readiness, they, and the friends who had accompanied them, took leave.

We watched the phaeton and horsemen until they were out of sight, and with them, I am sorry to say, departed the appearance of propriety which had hitherto been kept up. Truly was Mr Bernal's well-meant hint, that after Mrs Lancefield was gone, the party would be unfit for Miss Dare, not unnecessary. We returned to the spot where we had dined, but the young men almost directly became noisy. Philipson's spirits rose as the bottle circulated, and he declared that he was only then beginning to be comfortable. Loud talking and laughter increased; and when they took to drinking champagne out of tumblers, the young ladies agreed it was high time to leave them to themselves, and by mutual consent retreated.

We strolled down to the beach, but one of those changes of weather, not uncommon in this climate, had taken place, and very different was the scene from what it had been. The sky, as I before said, was obscured by clouds, and, reflected in the water, made the latter appear of a deep leaden colour. A heavy swell had set in; the surge broke with a hollow sound upon the rocks, which, in the already gathering shades of evening, seemed to assume frightful and ominous shapes; the wind moaned among the trees, and the sea-birds hovered about the shore with that low, plaintive cry which by sailors is regarded as a sign of bad weather. A peculiar depression settled on my spirits, and, I believe, it was shared by my companions. They confessed to being

cold, and anxious to get away, and did not long attempt to maintain cheerfulness, still less gaiety. As I saw the girls standing shivering in a group, and thought that in this wild place they were totally unprotected, that the young men, on whom we depended for our chance of getting home betimes, were all recklessly drinking, a foreboding of evil came over me.

"It is surely very dark for the time of day," was observed by some one; "we can scarcely see each other's faces, and yet the sun cannot be set."

"I do not think it is," replied another; "but it is impossible to tell for the clouds. Do, Annette, go and beg Sir Lawrence to be quick."

The message was more than once repeated without being attended to; Sir Lawrence gave her short answers, and at length said, "If you bother me any more, I will stay here all night." She rejoined us after her last unsuccessful mission, looking most disconsolate.

"He has not a thought of moving," said she, and, seating herself on a stone, she fairly burst into tears.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed the other two girls.

"I don't know," sobbed Annette.

"Was Delafield disagreeable to you?" asked her sister.

"No, no, it was not that; but—I am so cold—and the sea looks so black, and the wind makes such a dismal noise."

"The idea of crying because the sea looks black, and the wind makes the usual sound before bad weather!" said Christina. She and Jane laughed; for me, I could not. I felt rather inclined to cry with Lady Delafield.

We applied ourselves, however, to console her, and Miss Dare proposed taking a little walk to warm ourselves, and divert the time. We made accordingly a short circuit.

I had never before been so much in the bush, and, under other circumstances, should have liked to search for additions to my botanical collection. It was the season when most of the shrubs are in blossom, and doubtless I should have seen many to admire. As it is, I have a vague recollection of various parasitical plants and clusters of beautiful flowers hanging from the vine scrubs. About half-an-hour brought us again to the spot from whence we started. The remains of dinner had been removed, and Brown was busy repacking the hampers, but the gentlemen were not in sight. We hoped they had gone to prepare the boats, and walked to the sea-side where they had been left.

"Pull hard, Delafield! Take a better hold of it; you leave it all to Mark Dare and me," we heard as we approached; and passing round a rock, which intercepted our view, we perceived that we were destined to further delay; for the tide had risen, and carried the net a considerable distance from the shore. The young men, with their trousers tucked above their knees, were standing in the water, using their utmost exertions to recover it. It had been lent by Mr Dare, and they were all unwilling to lose it. Their anxiety was of course commendable, but the net was beyond their reach, and hopes of rescuing it seemed vain.

From time to time Philipson cast rather uneasy glances

at the sky, and at last, letting go his hold, he said, "It is of no use, Mark; we must abandon it to its fate."

"Oh, try a few minutes longer," expostulated Mark; "it was so kind of my uncle to lend it, and fishing is the only amusement he cares for."

I now ventured to reason with them, and represented that by remaining so long in the water they ran the greatest risk of cold. My advice was not listened to by Mark, but it was followed up by Philipson's.

"This will never do," he said, decidedly; "we must leave it, and lose no time in setting off."

On the state of the weather every one gave in to his opinion, and while Mark reluctantly consented to lose the net, Sir Lawrence called to Brown, and ordered him to send down the boatmen at once.

"The boatmen, I am afraid, are not in a state to be of much use, sir," replied Brown; "they are all intoxicated."

"The deuce they are!" exclaimed Sir Lawrence; "but they have not had anything to make them drunk."

"It is impossible," said Philipson; "I spoke to them not half-an-hour ago. They were sober then, and answered me quite clearly."

"I am afraid it is the case, Sir Lawrence," said Brown, who had turned aside after delivering the intelligence; "but if you please to leave me here, I will rouse them as soon as they are at all able to sit up, and follow with the things."

"We must see for ourselves," interrupted Philipson; and we all walked to where the boatmen had been last

seen, and there they were in certainly no common state of intoxication. The unexpected dilemma took away from Sir Lawrence the power of judging what was best to be done, and his only resource was in saying, what everybody felt, that it was very unaccountable, excessively inconvenient, if it did not cause us worse than inconvenience; but Philipson's wits were luckily ready on occasion, and in reply to his brother-in-law's appeal he said, "The only thing for it is that we contrive with one boat, and leave Brown, as he says, to bring the things to-morrow."

Sir Lawrence, in pursuance of this counsel, gave directions for one boat being got ready, and, that it might not be heavier than could be helped, desired that no packages should be placed in it, with the exception of the plate-box. In the activity he displayed, Brown showed himself worthy of the praise that had been bestowed upon him, and so promptly did he bestir himself, that when we returned from fetching our cloaks we found the boat prepared for our reception.

"Is the plate-box in?" inquired Sir Lawrence, after the ladies were seated.

"All right, Sir Lawrence; and these fellows will probably be well when they have had a sleep."

"Then come away as soon as you can rouse them," returned his master. "I shall expect to see you at the hotel early to-morrow," and we pushed off from the shore.

CHAPTER XXII.

CAMPING OUT.

OUR boat was crowded; it sunk deep in the water, which increased the fatigue to the young men in rowing. I had been struck as we entered with the appearance of Mark; he looked, not to say tired, but positively worn out. The whole day he had taken strong exercise, with scarcely an interval of rest, and this, together with the length of time he had been in the water, was more than he could stand. He took an oar, however, for while at all able to bear up he never would give in, but it would not do; and after pulling a few yards he was forced, though with evident reluctance, to own his incapacity for further exertion.

"I don't know what has come over me," said he; "I am as weak as a rat. I must have a rest, or I shall be fit for nothing. Delafield, do take my oar a while, and give me the rudder."

"Yes, you really must," said Philipson, glancing from Mark to Sir Lawrence, who, at all times averse to trouble, seemed to hesitate about complying; "and put some strength into it too," he added, as he watched his bro-

ther-in-law's feeble strokes, "or we shall be out all night —to say the least."

The last words were muttered, but Jane caught them, and reading in her brother's face anxiety, very different from his habitual careless expression, immediately took alarm. "The least? What do you mean by that, Augustus?"

"Nothing, but that I don't like the look of the night."

"If the night is bad it is your fault we are out in it," said Miss Philipson; "we should have got away a couple of hours ago, only you delayed so with the wine and one thing or another."

"Softly, softly, Jane," said Mark, "the wine had nothing to do with it; we all were anxious to save my uncle's net."

"Oh, you are as much to blame as he is, so you need not defend him, Dare."

"I'll tell you what, Jane," said Philipson, "if you have any regard for your own safety, you will defer those reproaches until we get on shore."

For some time they continued to row in silence, the increasing darkness rendering indistinct everything except the outline of the coast. Neither moon nor stars were visible, and the dense fog which had arisen obscured many of the lights on the land. Yet we trusted that Mr Philipson, well acquainted with the harbour, and possessing a sailor's discrimination, would take us safely. The apprehension of coming danger weighed down the spirits of the party, and not a word was spoken. Heavy drops of rain, with an interval between each, began to fall, and

the wind, which for the last few hours had been low and feeble, rose in fitful gusts, driving the spray into our faces, and causing the boat to rock, so that it was necessary to take a firm hold of the side. The rumbling of distant thunder reached us, and broad gleams of lightning appeared upon the horizon.

"It is only sheet lightning," said Christina, in a voice that gave the lie to her words.

Philipson made no reply, but knit his brows and said, "Pull away, Delafield."

Scarcely had he spoken than the boat was carried upwards on the top of an enormous wave, the thunder broke over our heads, and a flash of lightning nearly blinded us, revealing a circle of faces whose ghastly look of terror I can never forget. The shrieks of Jane Philipson and her sister yet ring in my ears, while the exclamation, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" less in piety than fear, burst from Sir Lawrence Delafield.

"Mind what you are about," shouted Philipson, "or, by Heaven, it is all over with us."

Sir Lawrence had all but let his oar go overboard, and now his hands trembled so that he was quite unable to use it. So inefficient were his efforts that Christina snatched it from him, saying, "I could do better than that myself."

Sir Lawrence, however, was too well bred, if that were all, to permit this, at least without an apology, and he said, "My hands are blistered, they smart so; but I cannot see you do that, Miss Dare; it is too great a shame."

"No, no," replied Christina; "if you can row, take the oar that is in the bottom of the boat. "I 'll stick to this one."

"I 'll take the other," said Mark, briskly, "I am quite fresh again;" and Sir Lawrence's politeness did not oppose this. He resumed the rudder, and his late place was better filled by them. Christina was very strong, and particularly expert in every kind of exercise. Her restless enterprising spirit induced her to learn many things not generally considered fit for a young lady. In the sheet of water in her father's grounds, she and Mark had often amused themselves rowing, and, quick and observant, they profited by Mr Philipson's hints. They both did exactly and with promptitude what he bade them, and were of material service.

The sudden and violent gust of wind subsiding was succeeded by a comparative calm, but so fearful was our situation that I had not an idea we should ever reach the shore. That my last moments were at hand I felt convinced, and my first thought, I confess, was for my brother. Since the death of our parents, we had been sole friends to each other, and I knew how desolate he would be in this country if I were gone. And I was not so selfish but to grieve for others also, and with anguish I reflected on the distress in which, before the morrow's sun arose, Mr and Mrs Dare would probably be plunged, and on the promise in the characters of my two young relations, who were thus to be cut off in the flower of their age. Painful likewise was it to think that of the remainder of the party not one, as far as I knew, had

ever given a thought to a hereafter. For myself I was able to anticipate death composedly, and awaited the awful moment with feelings far more tranquil than those with which I now look back upon that night. Amid these trying circumstances, every one present behaved better than Jane Philipson. Her courage, of which she was in the habit of boasting, completely gave way, and she vented her fears in repeated shrieks. One scream, I confess, escaped me—it was involuntary—at the moment the first peal of thunder burst over us, but I afterwards commanded myself, and endeavoured to comfort Lady Delafield, by whom I was seated. The second time that day, bursting into tears, she laid her head in my lap, and cried like a child. Soon the existence of a new disaster became known to us; some one remarked that the boat was half-full of water.

"Take the panikin, Jane, and bale it out," said Philipson; "you can do that, and do give over shrieking."

"Do not you see, Jane, how composed everybody else is?" added Sir Lawrence. Whether his composure was the result of self-command, or of excessive fear, might reasonably be doubted. But even though her own safety perhaps depended on her exertions, Miss Philipson could not control herself sufficiently to be of any use. I therefore, gently removing Lady Delafield, took the panikin, and did my best to get rid of the water.

"If we can manage for a very little longer we shall do," said Philipson. "The clouds are dispersing fast, and there is a full moon."

The sky certainly was clearing, we could see land

more distinctly, though how near we were the mist made it impossible to tell. But the improvement in the weather had, I felt, come too late; the boat laboured dreadfully, and the water flowed in faster than I could bale it out, so that there was every likelihood we must soon sink. Suddenly a shock, which threw us all out of our places, told us the boat had run aground. A loud shriek from Jane and Lady Delafield rose in the night air, but Philipson exclaimed, "Thank God, we are right now;" and, jumping alertly out of the boat, he held her, to prevent her being carried back to sea. So confused were we that we should have been unable to understand our situation had not heaven most singularly favoured us. A heavy mass of cloud overhead rolled away, the moon shone out, and revealed that we were within a few yards of the shore.

"The water is quite shallow," said Philipson. "Be quick, and land; you must not mind a wetting."

No one at this moment was inclined to mind anything of the kind, and with all the alacrity he could approve, we disembarked. The tide was low, and there was a broad space of sand on which we walked without danger, and no inconvenience was then regarded. When on firm ground, we paused to collect our ideas, and wait for Philipson, who, with the assistance of Mark, was securing the boat. Our party was soon collected, and we began to look about us, and consult about what was to be done. In safety, so far, we were, but our situation was anything but agreeable. Whether Sir Lawrence had steered badly, or the fault was with

the rowers, or the darkness of the night had misguided them, I know not, but we had diverged quite from our proper course, were now in a place with which we were totally unacquainted, and far, as we believed, from all human habitation. I diffidently asked if there was any chance of getting home that night.

"Not to-night, Miss Norris," replied Mark, cheerfully. "You must camp out for once, that is clear; but we will make a fire—there is no great hardship in it. Seriously, you know, if we attempt to move, we shall lose ourselves; we must remain until dawn." In this there was an obvious good sense which I could not dispute, and, unpleasant as was the prospect, the only thing to do was to make the best of it.

Much was said, and many plans suggested; but the first to any purpose was a proposal, from Philipson, that we should leave the beach, where we got the full benefit of the bleak air, and remove to some more sheltered spot. We accordingly climbed over the rocks, and penetrated the nearest scrub, and, without going so far that we could have any difficulty in regaining the boat, found ourselves in an open part where the grass was dry and thick, and well protected from the wind.

The experience of this day proved to me that Mr Philipson, numerous as were his defects, was not without redeeming traits of character,—that he had qualities which a good education might have improved to be really valuable. Throughout he displayed courage and presence of mind; and he now showed considerable resource in contrivances to make us and himself com-

fortable, setting energetically to work to gather wood for the fire, and speaking in a sensible, animated way that was very cheering.

How much does any trial bring out character! Well acquainted as I was with the three girls, I could not help contrasting the dispositions their respective conduct betokened. Lady Delafield was completely frightened and bewildered. She had taken, for the time, a fancy for me, and clung to me so closely, that I wa prevented being of any use. Her sister, Jane, stood by the fire drying her own clothes, giving no thought to any one save herself. Christina, though as wet, and with more reason to be tired than most of us, exerted herself for the public good, assisting Philipson and her cousin to pile up wood for the fire, and, when it was lighted, fanned the sparks with her shawl to make a flame.

To Mark camping in the bush was no novelty, and he viewed it all as a frolic. Not so Sir Lawrence, Annette's hero; unaccustomed to hardship, and deficient in the spirit to bear it well, he exerted himself just so far as to put his hand into his pocket and produce a box of lucifer matches, and then sat on the ground, the image of feeble despair. The efforts of the more active soon told for our advantage. A large fire was kindled, and Philipson called to us to draw round it and warm ourselves, and be comfortable. The sticks crackled and blazed, spirits that before had been depressed revived, and ere long, in lively chat, the late danger was nearly forgotten—by all but me. I could not so speedily banish the remembrance of the awful

peril to which we had been exposed, nor avoid reflections on the singularity of my situation. I looked back on the quiet life I had led in England, when the greatest misfortune—bearing the semblance of exposure—that had ever befallen me, was being caught in a snow-storm, or, in heavy rain, unable to keep up my umbrella against a high wind. It seemed as if those years of tranquillity had been too little appreciated. I felt anxiety, also, for what was yet to come; but this foreboding it was necessary not to encourage. I therefore did my best to repel it, and to be interested in the stories related by Mark of similar adventures, and to take part in the general conversation.

"Do you know, Augustus," said Miss Philipson, "I think you are a very wicked person."

"I daresay I am," replied Philipson; "but I don't know what grounds you have, at the present moment, for making the remark."

"You showed the cloven-foot in the boat," said Jane, "at the very time we were expecting to go down. You swore so horribly, it was quite frightful."

"It was quite so," repeated Philipson, lightly; "but what were you doing? Screaming. Was that much better? I swore only at you; I could hear nothing for your shrieks."

"Ah, Miss Jane," said Mark, "we shall know how to rate your courage in future."

"I heard better things than either," observed Annette. "I heard only Miss Norris's prayers, and they did me a great deal of good."

"And I suppose you and Miss Norris think it was her prayers got us to shore?" asked her brother. As Lady Delafield did not answer, I replied—

"We know that our prayers are always heard, and that in many cases they are granted."

"How superstitious you are," remarked Sir Lawrence. "I am sure, if I thought like that, I could not be comfortable for a moment."

"I suspect, though," said Mark, "that Miss Norris's view of the matter makes one, after all, the most easy. I think in the boat she was the most composed of us all."

This praise I felt I did not deserve; but, as it was not worth while gravely to disclaim it, I merely said—"No one's courage, I am sure, should be put before Miss Dare's: hers was active—mine, at best, was only passive."

"A very pretty way, Miss Norris, of appropriating to yourself and your pupil all the courage of the party," said Philipson; "but have you not a good word to say for me?"

Without thinking how great a reproach I implied, I answered—"You certainly, Mr Philipson, behaved better than——"

"Say it out," said he—"than you could have expected." This, of course, raised a laugh; and what tempted me to say it, I am sure I do not know, except that the idea was very strongly in my mind.

"What is that lying coiled up by you, Mark?" said Christina. "Poke it with your stick."

"Coiled up! What! Where?" exclaimed Annette, starting from her seat. "Oh, it is only a bit of stick. How wrong of you to frighten me that way."

"I did not mean to frighten you," said Christina. "It looked like a snake; and it is very likely we shall see some—they always come to a fire." Lady Delafield was very nervous. She was discomposed by what had already happened, and, with this new fear, was quite troublesome, constantly jumping up to shake her dress, and satisfy herself there was no snake near.

The young people, reconciled to their situation, and having dried their clothes, became sensible of wants which, among more serious discomfort, had not been thought of. It was many hours since we dined, and Philipson inquired if we did not feel hungry.

"Very," replied Christina; "but where is the use thinking about it? We are not likely to procure anything more substantial than ground cherries or native currants."

"You are not," said Philipson; "but see what a fine thing it is to be provident," and he drew from his pocket a small flask of spirits and several ship biscuits. "I shall keep it all myself."

"If you don't divide those biscuits," said Christina, "there will be an attack made upon you by the whole famishing mob,—my word, there will!"

"Are you aware," asked Philipson, laughing, as he threw her one of the biscuits, "that when you say 'my word,' you are swearing?"

"How do you make that out?" said she.

"You are, indeed. 'My word' means 'my colonial—my colonial oath.' But now," he added, "if we had only water, we might make some grog."

"But we haven't any water," said Sir Lawrence, for the first time, since we landed, speaking in a tone of interest.

"Ah! Delafield wakes up at the mention of grog," observed Philipson. "What do you look so dismal for, man? Draw nearer the fire, and cheer up."

With the first piece of advice Sir Lawrence complied, but not with the second; and, half aloud, he uttered his fretful complaints—"Precious pleasant this is! I wish the *Calypso* had not sailed, I would take my passage in her to-morrow. So much for Mark Dare's beautiful country!"

"It is a very beautiful country," replied Mark, who always stood up for Australia. "I should like to know in what other you could camp out all night, and not take your death of rheumatism?"

"We need not begin to crow yet," said Sir Lawrence, shivering; "I feel aguish all over."

"The best receipt in the world for ague is grog," said Philipson—"a preventive as well as a cure. Mark Dare, my fine fellow, run down to the boat and fetch the pannikin. I saw water, when we were looking for sticks, dropping from one of those rocks."

Mark took a piece of lighted wood from the fire, to act as a torch on his way; and as he departed, Philipson, delighted with the prospect of the additional comfort, became of a sudden unusually vivacious; capering

round the fire, and heaping upon it more wood, he exclaimed, "I call this jolly! We will have a song. Who will begin? If no one else will, I will."

"No, no, Augustus, don't sing," interposed Annette, anxiously; "do be quiet, and take off some of that wood."

"Why, what the deuce is the matter now?" asked Philipson. "Why should we not have a good fire, and sing, and be merry?"

"Because of the bushrangers," pursued Annette. "If we make a noise, they will hear us."

"Bushrangers! you silly girl. How full of absurd fears you are."

"They are not absurd," replied Annette. "There have been the most horrid robberies and murders in Sydney lately, and they are all committed by bushrangers, who lurk in these scrubs when not engaged in some exploit."

Philipson took pleasure in aggravating his sister's fears, and immediately commenced a story of a friend of his who, while riding in a lonely part, had been attacked by bushrangers, knocked off his horse, and nearly stunned, deprived of his money and the principal portion of his garments, and obliged, in this plight, to return home. I had seen, at Mr Dare's, the gentleman to whom this really occurred, and knew the account to be correct, though Philipson omitted to mention that the spot was very far from Sydney, and poor Lady Delafield was rendered a great deal more fidgety than before. Her brother asked me if I would sing.

I was very little in the mood, but was willing to contribute my mite towards the cheerfulness of the party, and promised to do so after he had favoured us himself. He had no objection to set the example, and inquired what we would have—something appropriate.

"You have got a song about Australia," said Christina. "I have heard you singing scraps of it. Let us have it."

"You must all join in the chorus, then," said he; and without further preface he struck up—

"Where far beneath the southern skies
Australia rises o'er the foam,
Behold a mighty nation rise,
Where Britons find a second home;
'Then hail, Australia, queen of the southern sea!'
For glorious days shall yet arise for thee.

"What though the first who crossed thy rolling wave
Were fettered outcasts from their native land,
Yet soon the free, the dauntless, and the brave,
In eager numbers sought thy sunny strand;
And scions, too, from many a noble tree,
Seek thee, Australia, 'queen of the southern sea.'

"Thy cities rise in busy pride,
Thy stately vessels ride the main,
And countless flocks are scatter'd wide,
O'er many a vast and boundless plain;
'Then hail, Australia, queen of the southern sea,
For prosperous, great, and wealthy thou shalt be.'"

We had just joined in the last chorus when Mark Dare reappeared, out of breath, and bringing a piece of important news. Returning from the boat he had discerned a light, which seemed to belong to a hut, and to be not

more than a quarter of a mile distant. He had not stopped to investigate, but, having informed us, said he would set off on another voyage of discovery. A general exclamation of hope and pleasure burst from the group, and Christina, springing up, said she would accompany him.

"You had better stay where you are, Miss Dare," said Philipson, "I will go with Mark;" and as he was likely to be of more use she consented to remain, and we were not kept in suspense very long. They soon returned from their survey, and Mark's greeting was, "What greenhorns we are! Here we have been condemning ourselves to spend the night in the bush, when there is a hut within a hundred yards of us." That we should try our fortunes with the owner, and procure lodgings, if possible, was simultaneously voted; so collecting our shawls we quitted the fire, and proceeded as quickly as the very imperfect light of the moon and the ruggedness of the soil would allow.

We had camped in a kind of valley, nearly on a level with the sea, but the hut was stationed on a rising ground, the ascent to which was a narrow steep pathway, covered with loose fragments of rock, at one side bordered by low scrub, and on the other by a dangerous precipice. Along this troublesome track, my companions hurried with a speed that outstripped me; but my anxiety was chiefly for some of the others, and being unequal to their pace I was contented to be left behind. Tired and incommoded by the underwood, I had fallen considerably in the rear, when I was startled by hearing footsteps be-

hind me. I paused to listen, feeling my heart palpitate, but was relieved by the person saying, "Oh, Miss Norris, do wait for me."

"Who is there?" said I.

"It is *me*," answered the voice of Lady Delafield.

My apprehension was turned into surprise. "Lady Delafield! I thought you were on in front; why are you not with Sir Lawrence?"

"Oh, he does not care," she replied, despondently; "and I am so tired, I can scarcely walk."

The indifference of Sir Lawrence, although always apparent, had never before been so marked; indeed, I thought I had never seen anything equal to this. I drew the poor young creature's arm through my own, and told her to exert herself a few minutes longer, and she would have it in her power to rest. In the little enclosure around the cottage, we found that the whole party had halted.

"Hallo! Annette," said Sir Lawrence, "I thought you were lost. I did not know till just now that it was Jane had got hold of my arm."

All within the hut was still, and we took it for granted the family had retired to rest, though a fire smouldered on the hearth, and there being no shutters of any kind to the window we were able cursorily to examine the room. We then knocked at the door. At first no answer was returned, but on the rap being repeated a rough voice said, "My gun is loaded; you had better not come here."

"We are not thieves," replied Sir Lawrence; "we are

a party who have lost our way, and want to know if you will give us shelter for the night. You shall be handsomely paid for it."

"We are not robbers, indeed," said Annette; "do let us in, I am so tired."

Perhaps this childish complaint reassured the man as much as the promise of remuneration. He came into the outer apartment; "Maybe you are what you say," said he, "but I 'll have a look at you first." He regarded us from the window, and the moonlight falling on the white dresses of the young ladies he was satisfied, and opened the door, which fastened simply by a latch, to admit us.

"It is an awkward business," he observed, when we had explained our case, "for we have but one room, and my wife is just going to bed."

A woman now came out of an adjoining chamber, and rather discouragingly said she had no means of accommodation for such a large party.

"We can return to our fire if you will allow these ladies to remain here; they are very much tired," said Mark, and he slipped some money into her hand.

"You are a free-hearted young gentleman, any how," said the woman, "and the ladies are welcome to stay here. Sure, they do seem tired."

"And maybe," resumed her husband, "you gentlemen need not be out all night in the bush. There is a shed in the yard, if you would sleep more comfortably there."

"I was sure a bushman would never refuse hospitality,"

remarked Sir Lawrence. "I am a stranger in the colony, but I have heard of the hospitality of the bush."

Sir Lawrence deserved credit for tact in this observation. Both the man and his wife looked pleased; the latter especially became very civil, saying, all that the hut contained was at our service. She brought our whole party in, and frankly sympathised in our misfortunes. "You are sorely tired," she remarked, addressing Christina, "though you look as if you would not give in; but that poor young critter seems well-nigh done."

Lady Delafield had, after the first moment, taken no notice of anything; but, having thrown herself into a chair, sat with her head drooping forward, already almost asleep.

"She had best lie down a bit on my bed," continued the woman; "it is clean enough, though not what she has been used to."

"Oh, yes, let me lie down on the bed," said Annette, and I all but carried her into the next room. She threw herself into the rough low couch, and in less than two minutes was fast asleep. I made her as comfortable as I could, and then returned to the other apartment, where the girls and young men were gathered round the fire, which the woman had replenished, and were watching the preparation of a damper she was about to bake on the embers. She gave us also some tea; and though this was drunk out of the pannikins, without milk, we found it very refreshing. It was strong, and bountifully sweetened with black sugar boiled in it. Mark told us this was regular bush fare, and many were the times he had

supped off tea and damper, and passed the night, not to say under a shed, but with no roof above him save the starred vault of heaven. Christina proposed rousing Lady Delafield to offer her some tea, but I suggested it would be a pity to disturb her, as had she been very hungry she would not have fallen asleep; and her sister, who had not given her a thought until Miss Dare spoke, said, "Oh, leave her where she is."

Having eaten what we were inclined for, we separated for the night, which was then far spent. Annette was still sleeping when I followed Christina and Jane to our quarters, and the latter, seating herself on the edge of the bed, seemed determined to appropriate the vacant place. The hut was of a ruder description than any usually seen in England; the walls, both within and without, were bare, and the window frames devoid of glass; the slabs, six inches apart, admitting so free a circulation of air that we had reason to congratulate ourselves on the high wind having gone down. As it was, Jane Philipson complained of the draught, and so often did she declare she was sure she would take her death of cold, that at last Christina said, "Don't you think, Miss Norris, you and I might hang up our shawls before the windows? They would keep out a good deal of air." To this arrangement Miss Philipson offered no objection, although quite aware that we were dependent on our garments for covering. Our hostess had spread on the floor two or three mats, and on them we lay down, but during the whole of that night sleep never visited my

eyes. Fever and excitement, to say nothing of one or two other sources of annoyance, banished repose, though I heard my companions breathing in uninterrupted slumber. I rose early, and procured a pailful of cold water, by the ample use of which I made myself tolerably comfortable.

Christina was the next to awake, and arranging her dress, without disturbing the others, she and I were glad to escape from the small close room. We met no one, the man and his wife being both, I suppose, engaged with their morning work. Scarcely a breath stirred the air, and all around was that deep stillness so remarkable in the bush. How different is that hour in an English village, or, still more, in the vicinity of a city! There the hum of life in all its various shapes hails the opening of another day, telling of active pursuit, of interest and animation, and of that social fellowship for which the God of this world has formed His people. Here, save a solitary hut, were no traces of human habitation; the gum-trees cast their scanty shade on every side; even the very birds were mute, combining to make the scene more silent than that which was ere the word was given to create man. It was, however, a beautiful morning, and Christina and I walked to the brink of the precipice which overhung the sea. The boat lay almost directly below, and the harbour was then ruffled by only a gentle ripple. "How curious it is," said I, "that the water which was yesterday so dark and stormy should be today so calm."

"Yes," replied Christina, "and it would have been as calm had we all, as I thought we should, been buried under it."

We soon retraced our steps, desirous to arrange for our departure, for Miss Dare, no less than myself, felt for the anxiety her parents must be experiencing. At a little distance from the hut we met Sir Lawrence Delafield, Mr Philipson, and Mark Dare. All three looked pale, and the worse for their night's lodging, but Philipson and Sir Lawrence, compared to Mark, were in appearance well; his quite justified Christina's exclamation, "Good heavens, Mark, how ill you look!"

"I don't know what it is," answered he, "I am rather wretched; I could not get a wink of sleep. I have been alternately hot and cold all night. I envied those two fellows snoring."

This account rather startled me, and, putting it together with his complaint in the boat, I was apprehensive he was in for a serious illness. My countenance, I suppose, was uneasy, for he laughed as he turned away, and said, "Why do you look so foreboding, Miss Norris? We are going to have breakfast now, that will do us all good."

"We had better not wait for breakfast," Christina said.

"It will not detain us a quarter of an hour," replied Sir Lawrence, "and I do not think your cousin can row without fortifying himself."

"The old man was up very early," observed Philipson, "and caught some fine eels in a water-hole near; the woman is dressing them now. I daresay they will

be very good, and there is a jolly water-melon and lots of peaches, so we shall have a rattling breakfast."

"Only, I hope no one intends to be particular," added Sir Lawrence, languidly, "for there are only three tin pints for us all to drink out of."

"Oh, we will rough it," said Christina. "What a thing this adventure will be to talk about for a long while."

The woman now came to the door, and invited us in to breakfast. She could not muster seats for above half the party, though every box and stool was put in requisition; but the young people made light of the deficiency, and ample justice was done to the tea, damper, fruit, and eels. They rallied each other on their forlorn appearances, and, by talking and laughing, tried to dissipate all uneasy feelings; for each had a peculiar subject of vexation. Mark and Christina were uncomfortable on account of Mr and Mrs Dare; Philipson had doubts how his breach of promise would be regarded by his captain; and Sir Lawrence was fidgety about the safety of his plate box, which had been left, he believed, all night in the boat.

"By the by," observed Mark, "now I think of it, I don't remember seeing it when I went for the pannikin."

"Perhaps, after all, Bernal was right," said Philipson, "and the fellow was too sharp for you, Delafield." Sir Lawrence only muttered; he did not repeat his confident assurance that Brown could not overreach him.

Breakfast was soon despatched, our entertainers were liberally rewarded, and we once more took possession

of the boat. There Sir Lawrence's plate certainly was not. Mark was then looking better; he was able to row; and the little voyage was prosperously effected. We landed near Mrs Philipson's house, but the Delafields went at once to their hotel, and we proceeded with all haste home.

"Was mamma very much alarmed we did not return last night?" was the first question asked of the footman who opened the door.

"Missis did not know you were from home, Miss, but master was very much alarmed, and he is out now inquiring about you." This looked as if Mrs Dare had been purposely kept in ignorance of our absence, and such was in reality the case. She retired often early to rest, and was in the habit of breakfasting in bed; so that, from consideration for her delicate health, her husband had told her we might be late, and not confided to her his own fears. We went noiselessly to our separate apartments, and, in a few minutes, Mr Dare's step was heard in the hall. Both Christina and Mark ran down to meet him, and the former exclaimed, "I am afraid you have been very much alarmed about us, dear papa, you look so pale; but *indeed* it was not our fault."

"I believe you, my child," replied Mr Dare; "thank God you are safe." He seemed drawn out of his usual cold manner, and kissed her with emotion; then turning to Mark, he held out his hand to him, and said, "You, Mark, are destined, I think, to cause us anxiety."

"My follies shall never cause you any more anxiety,

sir; they are quite over, I promise you. I am so sorry we gave you uneasiness to-day." They went into the library together; and I afterwards was informed by Christina that her father had had no hope but that we were lost, having heard early in the morning that a boat had gone down in the harbour, which report was perfectly true, and two persons were drowned. Before meeting us, however, he learned we were safe, having encountered the Delafields on their way to the hotel. Of the correctness of our statement, when we detailed everything, he appeared to entertain no doubts, and thus this unpleasant affair passed over.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STRAWBERRY GATHERING.

WHEN Christina informed Mark of Mrs Hill's invitation to the strawberry gathering, it was found, to their mutual regret, that he had formed for himself a separate engagement, which would prevent him accompanying us. We therefore went alone, Christina anticipating a merry day. But a sad disappointment awaited us. In the verandah we met Mrs Hill, who accosted us with a grave countenance, "I am afraid, Christina dear, that our amusement will be damped this morning; my poor Fanny is very unwell. She has had a return of the spasms she suffered so much from last summer."

"Poor, dear Fanny," said Christina; "but are they over?—is she better?"

"She is better, at all events for the present," replied Mrs Hill; "but it is necessary to keep her very quiet, and she will certainly be unable to join you to-day; so, if you will find it dull, and would rather go home, tell me so frankly."

"Do you want me to go away?" asked Christina, with her usual bluntness.

"No, my dear," replied Mrs Hill, smiling at the plainness with which she went direct to her point; "it was on your own account only I spoke."

"Then we would rather remain, would we not, Miss Norris?" said Christina; "and if you will let me sit with Fanny in her room, perhaps I can amuse her; I will be very quiet."

"I am sure you will," replied Mrs Hill, "and Fanny will take it very kind. Louisa is out just now, so I will leave you with her for a little while."

Fanny was extended on a couch in her mother's room, and her appearance showed she had suffered severely. Her face wore a sweet, placid expression, but she was excessively pale, and looked exhausted. Christina spoke in a low, subdued voice. It was unnecessary to remind her that she must not allow her spirits to rise, for, seating herself at the foot of the sofa, she endeavoured to interest Fanny's attention with a gentleness, I had believed, foreign to her character.

Fanny was unable to converse beyond an occasional remark or question, but Christina accommodated herself to her weak state, and considerately, from a fear of exciting her, suppressed all account of our adventure in the bush. And for some time the variety appeared to do poor Fanny good; but, by and by, she grew quite silent, if possible, paler than before, and I perceived in her features the change which pain brings. Christina observed the alteration at the same moment, and, stop-

ping abruptly, said, "You are ill, Fanny; what can I do for you?"

"Open the window, please," said Fanny, "and give me some drops from that bottle."

I hastened to comply with this latter request, while Miss Dare threw open the window, and then ran to the bell; "Shall I send for Mrs Hill?"

"No, don't ring," said Fanny; "don't alarm mamma, unless there is occasion. It may not come bad."

She took eagerly the wine-glass from me, and the restoring drops, together with the fresh air and the perfume with which Christina bathed her temples, revived her. She opened her eyes, and, with a sigh of relief, said, "I am not going to have it this time, when it is only a threatening as it was. just now, the breeze from the garden will often refresh me. Is it not so fragrant, blowing over the roses?"

"Would you not like some flowers in the room?" said Christina, with a ready anticipation of her wishes. "I will fetch you a bouquet from the garden. The scent will do you good."

Fanny smiled her assent, and Christina ran through the French windows on to the lawn, which was at this season gay with beautiful and odoriferous flowers. Fanny raised herself on the couch, and followed her with her eyes. Buoyant with health and spirits, which had never known real depression, Christina moved with a quick elastic step, now bounding from one parterre to another, now pausing to select the choicest blossoms.

"How happy she is!" said Fanny; "able to do all

that she wishes. I hope she may never be confined to a sofa as I am."

I would have said something, but the return of Christina prevented me, and Fanny, resuming her cheerfulness, thanked her for the flowers, and begged she would arrange them in glasses for her. Christina prepared to do so, and had just filled the vases with water when Louisa entered. After inquiring affectionately how her sister felt, Miss Hill seated herself at the table to assist Christina, and while they were thus occupied attention was a little diverted from Fanny, though still there was no inconsiderate talking and laughing. Both the girls appeared to feel too sincerely for their suffering companion to be inclined to be gay. Suddenly I was alarmed to see again a change on Fanny, and as her brow contracted, and she pressed her hand to her side, I said, hastily, "Miss Hill, I think your sister wants something." Louisa turned round, glanced at her, and went at once for her mamma.

This time the spasm came in earnest, and seldom had I witnessed suffering so acute or so meekly borne. Christina, unaccustomed to such sights, stood at the foot of the sofa, her eyes filled with tears. I was glad Mrs Hill allowed her to remain; there are lessons that do us all good. Louisa exerted herself for her sister's relief, giving no expression to her feelings as long as anything was to be done; but when the seizure was past she bent over her, pressed her lips to her forehead, and whispered, "Dear Fanny, how I wish I could have it instead!"

"No, no, Louisa, everything is best as it is; is it not, Miss Norris?"

"What, my dear?" said I, for I had scarcely attended to the words.

"Is not everything quite right as it is?" asked Fanny, with a faint smile.

"We know that whatever is, is right, my dear Miss Fanny," I said, "and yet it is very difficult to understand why one so young and so good as you should be so severely tried."

"Oh, do not call me good," sighed Fanny, "but it may make me better, and it is of use to Louisa as well as to me; it makes her think, and I am more thankful for health when I have it, and for the other blessings granted me."

How truly Christian was the spirit of this reply, and who could doubt the power of the religion that endowed this young frail creature with such fortitude to bear and faith to receive the trial as for her good!

But Fanny was not able for so many people in the room; her pulse was quick and irregular, and Miss Dare, Louisa, and I were dismissed. Mrs Hill begged us to sit down to luncheon without her, as she would keep watch where she was. "You will find Mr Bernal in the drawing-room," she said; "I gave a general order not to admit visitors, but I could hardly shut him out."

Luncheon was by this time ready; Mr Bernal we found below, with Frank for a companion, and Mr Hill being not expected home, we proceeded to the dining-room. The presence of Mr Bernal had this morning a

good effect; it helped the young ladies to recover their spirits, and as they had left Fanny better they were able to follow his lead in conversation, which soon became easy and animated, as was usual when he had part in it. As was natural it turned on the pic-nic, and Christina gave an amusing description of our subsequent catastrophe, although, in recounting it, she adopted a tone I very much regretted. Louisa listened, entertained, and pitying us at the same time, but Mr Bernal required assurances that Miss Dare had not taken any cold, and, when satisfied on this point, he sympathised in what he supposed an extremely disagreeable situation. He was seated next her at table, and, in a low voice, said, "You experienced rather more than enough of noise and racket, Miss Dare." But this Christina would not admit, and declared that, now it was over without any bad consequences, she was glad of the adventure, and pleased she had not gone home with Mrs Lancefield. Mr Bernal seemed vexed, and I thought it was with a view to give another turn to the conversation that he spoke of Lady Delafield, saying that he had never before met her in society, and had been unprepared to find her so frivolous and unformed.

"I was very well acquainted with Delafield's family at home," he said, "and I am sure they will be very much vexed with the *mésalliance*. Lady Delafield, his mother, especially I feel for."

"She had a right to expect a better connexion for her son," observed I. "If I am not mistaken, he is of a good, old family."

"Certainly, they had a right to expect him to do better," replied Mr Bernal; "and yet, Lady Delafield is such an excellent person, that I believe she would overlook the want of connexion, if other points were satisfactory; but the girl has neither manners nor education. She is pretty; but what is that?"

"She is very young," I said; "and if his relations, when they go home, do not throw her off, but are kind to her, she may improve."

"She may, no doubt," replied Mr Bernal; "but a man, I fear, acts rashly who marries an ill-brought-up girl on the chance of improving her. Lady Delafield is, however, the best of her set. I never met with such a bold, forward person as her sister. The way she made up to Mrs Lancefield exceeded anything I had ever seen; and Philipson, though I don't know much of him, gave me strongly the idea he was on his good behaviour. I have a notion he could be very different."

"You are right there," laughed Christina. "Almost as soon as Mrs Lancefield was gone, the party underwent a change for the worse. At one time I really was rather frightened; it was getting very late; a storm, I saw, was coming on, and the gentlemen were all drinking, with the exception of Mark; and, indeed, I don't know that I ought to make an exception in his favour."

"How distressing," said Mr Bernal, in whose eyes the fault of the young men, strange to say, was not so venial as in Miss Dare's; "how alarmed you must have been."

"Oh! my nerves are very strong," replied Christina;

"it takes a good deal to alarm me; and, on the whole, it was famous fun." Mr Bernal repeated the last words with a look of unqualified surprise.

"Yes, fun," reiterated Christina; "you look as if you do not know the meaning of the word."

"I think I do," replied Mr Bernal; "but when fun becomes impropriety——" She interrupted him, "Oh! the word fun is a sufficient excuse for a little impropriety." A question of delicacy was an awkward one to arise between a gentleman and young lady; and Mr Bernal replied only, "I am sorry you think so."

I fancied he sighed. Christina, blinded by self-will and love of disputation, did not perceive how much she was injuring herself in the judgment of this right-thinking man; or, if she had a momentary suspicion that she had conveyed an unfavourable impression, it was not sufficiently strong to hinder her from bringing forward immediately afterwards opinions quite in a piece with the former. Mr Bernal affected to be busy with the slice of melon on his plate, and Louisa did not speak, but her brother Frank observed—

"Ah! Christina, you are too fond of fun; I'll tell you something in your way. Have you heard of Miss Braham's elopement?"

"What! a daughter of Braham the Jew?" said Christina. "No, I have not heard of it."

"Some of her brothers go to our school," resumed Frank, "and the boys were talking of it to-day. They ran away, and were brought back; and they ran away again, and got married, and on board his ship. The

man's name is Mickie. He is the captain of a merchant vessel; and they are now out of the reach of pursuit."

"I heard one of them was going to be married," said Christina, "but I understood it was to a Jew, who keeps a store in Sydney."

"Her father had arranged her marriage with him," replied Frank, proud to have a piece of news to relate, "but they did not like each other, and old Braham would not consent to her marrying Captain Mickie."

"I wonder which of them it is," said Christina. "Leah is the handsome one."

"Do you know them, Miss Dare?" asked Mr Bernal, with slightly raised eyebrows.

"Well—not exactly—I am sure I have no wish to claim their acquaintance," said Christina, "but I have been in company with them at the Philipsons." Mr Bernal again sat thoughtfully silent.

"I think she was right," observed Louisa, "not to marry a person she did not like; but nothing could justify her in opposing her father by running away."

"Do you think not, Louisa?" said Christina. "If she liked Captain Mickie, and her father would not give his consent, I think she did quite right to run away."

"I am very glad, Miss Dare," remarked Mr Bernal, "that my cousin Louisa enlightened me on the subject of your character. She told me how fond you are of supporting strange opinions. You bring forward many which, I am sure, you do not really hold."

"Why will you say so, Louisa?" exclaimed Christina, petulantly; "do you mean I tell falsehoods? All the opinions I bring forward I really hold."

"But I hope, Miss Dare," pursued Mr Bernal, "that you do not really hold the opinion that any circumstances can justify a young person in disobeying her parents, especially about such a thing as marriage?" He smiled, but seemed anxious for her answer.

"Indeed, I think circumstances may quite justify her," replied Christina; "it is her happiness that is at stake, and she would be a very weak, foolish girl who would sacrifice it to the whims of parents."

Mr Bernal said nothing, but Frank, who had been listening to what was passing, said, "What would you have done, Christina, if you had been in Leah Braham's place, would you have run away?"

Christina hesitated for a moment, then said decidedly, "Yes, I think I would; parents often act very harshly, just because they cannot judge of what is for the happiness of their children. It is always allowed that the feelings are very different in youth and in later life, and that almost every subject is differently viewed."

"True," thought I; "few old people think as you do, my dear, though it is to be feared your views will not change until too late for your own happiness."

Mr Bernal asked; "Do you then acknowledge no duty as due from children to their parents?"

Regardless of his grave tone, Christina replied, "Oh, duties! I despise them."

No remark followed the speech, and for once Chris-

tina seemed conscious of having gone too far. She looked for a moment rather blank, but rallied, and her spirits became higher than before.

When luncheon was over she expressed a wish to go into the garden, and on Louisa saying it was too hot, she begged us to remain where we were, and went out alone, seeming too restless to stay indoors. Mr Bernal, under pretence of carrying her a parasol, followed her, and for more than half an hour they walked together up and down a path shaded by a vine trellis. The subject of their conversation I afterwards learned.

As soon as the sun got low, we applied ourselves to gather strawberries, Mr Bernal remaining to assist; but something had gone wrong, and though we all intended to be cheerful, the occupation did not afford the amusement anticipated. Louisa was anxious about her sister, and frequently deserted us to take Fanny a few strawberries, when she came upon any particularly fine. Mr Bernal behaved as one who had a secret vexation, being alternately silent and preoccupied, and talking and laughing with forced spirits.

Earlier than usual, Christina proposed our departure; and as we proceeded homewards, offered no remark on our visit, only when Mark met us at the door of the Pines, and inquired what sort of day we had, she replied briefly, "Excessively stupid."

She followed me up-stairs, and lingered in my room while I was taking off my things. Having put away my bonnet and shawl, I wished to go to the school-room, and inquired if she was not going to get ready for tea.

"Directly, but I want to tell you something first," she said, hesitating. "Was it not odd, Miss Norris? when Mr Bernal joined me in the garden, after luncheon, he returned to the discussion about Miss Braham, and about our being out in the bush, and said he knew I had not been in earnest in what I said, and tried to make me unsay it all."

"Indeed, my dear," I replied; "any one who has any interest in you would have been shocked with what you said; if you were in jest, it was too like earnest, and if you spoke only your real sentiments, you should, for your own sake, correct such faulty principles. I hope you did unsay it?"

"No, I did not," replied Christina, flushing. "I was not in jest, and I would not lead any one to suppose me different from what I am. I daresay being opposed I said more than I had originally; but what do you think he meant? was it not strange?"

I hesitated for a moment, and then I said, "Christina, it is very contrary to my usual practice to speak to so young a girl as you are of love or admiration, especially when, as in this case, the attention is not explicitly declared; but you ask my opinion, and you shall have it. My belief is that Mr Bernal likes you—likes you as a man prefers the woman whom he would seek to make his wife; but your way of speaking frightens and annoys him, and I have the conviction that unless you change he will make it a point of duty with himself to go no further. He is not a man to propose to a girl whose principles he cannot trust and approve."

Christina stood silent while I spoke, her eyes cast down, and her colour much heightened. Poor girl, her feelings were fresh and unhackneyed, at all events; when I ceased she still remained silent for some minutes, at last, raising her head with a proud gesture, she observed, "I cannot play the hypocrite, however great the temptation may be," and with an unusually slow step, and something of dignity in her carriage, she walked from the room.

It was, as I have just said, very little my habit to direct the thoughts of a young girl to the subjects on which I had now spoken to Christina, and in most cases I would have considered that the most unexceptionable offer of marriage was at her age rather to be regretted than otherwise; but Christina was unlike the girls to whom I had hitherto been accustomed, by her reckless and restless spirit she was throwing herself away; and from the day when I first suspected Mr Bernal of being attracted by her, I felt that an early engagement, to one who was in every way worthy, might have a very beneficial effect upon her character. I saw her now persistently taking the very means to estrange such a man by her folly, and this it was that prompted me to speak as I had done; nor, though my decision was unpremeditated, do I think my judgment was bad.

It was, if I recollect rightly, the day following this unsatisfactory visit, that we received one very unlooked-for and embarrassing. Mark, Christina, and myself were assembled in the school-room about noon, when the sound of wheels in the avenue drew our attention. It

was an unusual hour for visitors, and the day was besides so very wet that few persons would like to venture out. Mark went to the window, and called his cousin to look at the vehicle which was stopping at the door. It was a cab of the meanest description, and who should alight from it but Lady Delafield!—in such a plight, her person in disorder, and holding a pocket handkerchief to her face.

"What is in the wind now?" said Mark. "Lady Delafield in a hack cab, alone, and crying!"

Apparently it was not Mrs Dare she inquired for; the footsteps passed the drawing-room, and proceeded rapidly along the passage which led to our sitting-room. The door opened, and unannounced she entered. Her dress was carelessly adjusted, her hair dishevelled, her features swollen with weeping. We all approached her, but without regarding us she sank into a chair, and, directing her eyes to Christina, said, "Oh, I am come to you for advice." She was so agitated that for some minutes she could say no more, and, astonished and embarrassed, we could only soothe her, and wait until she was composed to learn what had brought her there. With instinctive delicacy, thinking she would speak more freely if he were not present, Mark exchanged a glance with his cousin, and moved towards the door. "Oh, Dare," said Lady Delafield, as he opened it, "will you speak to Sir Lawrence?"

Mark paused, in expectation of her saying for what he was to speak, but as she added no explanation he observed, "You will rather speak to Christina first, I am

going only into the verandah; if I can be of any use she will find me there."

I rose to retire also, but Miss Dare signed me to remain, and as Mark closed the door she offered her a glass of water, and, sitting down beside her, said, "Drink this, Annette, and then let us hear what has happened."

Having drank the water, Lady Delafield was able to give us a statement, unconnected indeed, though sufficiently clear. "Sir Lawrence has found out about papa," was her commencement; "I am sure it was no fault of mine. I did not know; did you?" This was an awkward question, but fortunately she did not wait for an answer. "Jane and Augustus knew; they remembered him before he went to Norfolk Island. He was sent there; but you know I was so young then."

"Then your father is not dead," exclaimed Christina, "as Mrs Philipson always gave us to suppose?"

"Oh, mamma told strange stories. I thought he was dead, but he came up a week ago from Hobart Town, just when Delafield was put in prison; and mamma hoped he would be gone before Lawrence got out, and tried to persuade him to live at Aunt Braham's. He generally slept there, but he would always come to our house through the day. He used to come early, and stay quite till night."

It was no great wonder that feelings of surprise and displeasure prevented Christina at once sympathising in Lady Delafield's situation. She had likewise some curiosity, for she interrupted, "I think I have seen him, a short, stout man, and wears a dressing-gown."

"Yes, exactly," replied Annette, not the least offended, "and does not look very nice; quite—quite—Delafield says disreputable."

"But how very wrong it was of your mother to impose upon us so," said Christina, with a selfishness that was not unnatural, allowing her sense of personal wrong to triumph over her feeling for another's distress.

"It was very," replied Annette. "I do not excuse it, but I was not in the secret, so you should not be angry with me, Christina."

The imploring look and tone with which she made this defence recalled Christina to herself, and she said, "Well, it would be unjust to blame you if you knew nothing of the deception; so go on, and tell me how I can be of use to you."

"Yes—you are very good; but—what was I saying?"

"You were saying that Sir Lawrence had found it out."

"Oh, yes. I said he was angry, and so he was—so very, very angry. He would not believe I did not know about it, and he said that the daughter of a—a convict, and the keeper of a gin-shop, should not be his wife." And here a fresh burst of tears overpowered the poor girl. She was, however, a person whose grief did not last long, and in a few minutes she again spoke. "We went there to-day. Papa was in the drawing-room; mamma, I think, tried to get him out, for I heard him say he did not know why he was always to be huddled into another room when his son-in-law came. I think he was not quite sober, for he staggered up to Delafield, and said he had not been introduced, and asked if we

got on well together; and he said, 'I hope you behave well, Annette.' Lawrence has a very hot temper. He looked almost as if he would have struck him, and said, 'You are drunk, man! What right have you to call my wife Annette?' Papa said he had surely a right to call his daughter by her own name, and then there was such confusion, oh, I was so frightened! Lawrence stormed; he said he had been taken in to marry me, that he would leave me and go to England; and he went out of the house, and I have not seen him since." We were about to speak, but she hurriedly continued, "And where I am to live I am sure I don't know; mamma and Jane have both been so unkind to me, they won't have me; they would not have let me come here this morning, but I got the servant to fetch me a cab; and, now, what would you advise me to do, Christina?"

As Miss Dare was solely appealed to, I, of course, did not intrude my opinion, nor had I any desire to do so, for she spoke judiciously; with an air of reflection beyond her years she sat for a moment in silence, and then said, "Do you know where Sir Lawrence is?"

"He has still rooms at the hotel. I suppose he cannot be gone to England yet."

"Then," suggested Christina, "I can only advise you to lose no time in going to him; explain that you knew nothing of all this"——

"But I did," interposed Annette, "and he would not believe me."

"In the moment of excitement and anger very likely he did not attend to you," replied Christina; "and you

know, Annette, he has reason to be hurt that he was so deceived by all your family, and you cannot wonder if at first his displeasure included you; but he will be calm by this time, and if you assure him again that when you married you were ignorant of these circumstances, and remind him of the difference of age between yourself and your brother and sister, he will believe you."

Lady Delafield blushed, and looking down, twisted her wedding-ring round upon her finger,

"But I know he cannot always believe me," she said, "for I have sometimes told him things that are not quite true."

On this point we could offer her no consolation; that she was by no means habitually sincere both Miss Dare and myself were aware; though how far she had practised duplicity towards her husband, we knew not.

"I have sometimes told him things that are not at all true," she continued, as neither of us replied. I was conscious that this was no time to enforce the advantage of truthfulness, or the danger of the opposite fault, yet I could not refrain from saying, "Then, my dear Lady Delafield, let your present suffering be a lesson to you, and never again, in the smallest degree, deviate from the truth." I stopped abruptly, feeling that in the observation I was guilty of an impropriety, but Lady Delafield did not take it amiss; on the contrary, she replied, "I wish I had taken your advice, Miss Norris; you said to me something like that once before. I will—I think I will in future speak the truth, only I have not always courage; but, Christina, what else must I do?"

"You should tell Sir Lawrence," resumed Miss Dare, "that you are ready to quit your family, and accompany him to England."

"You think I ought; but suppose he were to be unkind to me when I am away from them all?"

"That must not be thought of now, Lady Delafield," replied Christina. "You are his wife, and nothing can undo that, you must abide by his fortunes; but I do not think you need alarm yourself."

"Do you not?" said Lady Delafield, seemingly much comforted. "Do you think he will by and by not mind it?"

"I cannot say that," replied Christina, "for he never can think lightly of the deceit practised upon him; but when he is convinced you had no share in it, he will do you justice, and regard you as formerly."

"Oh, thank you, Christina, dear," exclaimed Lady Delafield. "Then I will go to him at once." The affair appeared settled, but Lady Delafield's resolution gave way, and always doubtful and indecided, she said, "There is one thing more. He is so passionate, I shall be so frightened to meet him; will you go with me?"

At this proposition, so impossible to be acceded to, Christina smiled, and answered, "That I cannot do, and you will make it up a great deal better alone; but I will, if you wish it, call on you to-morrow."

With this promise Annette was so far satisfied, but still wavering, she said, "I wonder what Mark would say, if he would speak to Sir Lawrence first."

"I do not think Mark can do that," replied Christina,

"and I assure you Sir Lawrence will be more inclined to believe you if we do not interfere."

"Mr Mark's advice," I said, "will, I think, be the same as Christina's, but you can ask him for yourself."

"Christina will tell him everything," replied Annette, "and then bring him here; and, Miss Norris, do sit down beside me while she is gone."

Miss Dare sought her cousin, and I meanwhile persuaded Lady Delafield to avail herself of the interval to arrange her dress a little, and for that purpose took her into my own room, where, after she had bathed her eyes, I smoothed her hair for her, and when we returned to the school-room we found Christina and Mark awaiting us; to the latter she spoke at once, and without reserve, taking it for granted he had been made acquainted with the whole story. His advice was similar to Christina's, and Lady Delafield said, "Will you then, Mark, go with me. He likes you; he says you are the only gentleman of the party." She was very urgent, but Mark quite firmly, though very gently, declined.

"I would with pleasure, Lady Delafield, if my presence could be of any service to you, but believe me, it would be the contrary; though I daresay I shall see Sir Lawrence in the course of to-morrow, I will make a point of doing so. Now, will you allow me to take you to your carriage?"

The same flexibility of disposition that incapacitated Lady Delafield for acting or judging in circumstances at all embarrassing, rendered her susceptible to beneficial as well as to evil influence.

"Well, I suppose as you and Mark agree about this, and Miss Norris thinks the same, you must all be right, so I shall go at once; only be sure, Christina, to call to-morrow."

She then accepted Mark's offered arm, and was conducted by him down-stairs.

Of this visit Christina did not give an account to her mother, though she thought it right to mention that Lady Delafield had called, and requested to see her at the hotel. Mrs Dare made no objection, and, remembering that she ought herself to leave cards, said she would accompany her. Mark had intended to go with his cousin, but the hour at which his aunt went out was later than he liked, and, wishing to find Sir Lawrence at home, he made his call at about two o'clock. On the stairs of the hotel he met Sir Lawrence, and said that he had come to call on him and Lady Delafield.

"You will not find Lady Delafield in the drawing-room; she is arranging for a sea voyage; and I have some business at the wharf. I want to inquire about the *St. George*, that sails in a few days; will you come with me?" This showed Mark that the quarrel was so far made up, but the subject was a delicate one, on which he could not enter unless the other led to it.

It was apparently not for the sake of conversation that Sir Lawrence invited him to walk, for, as they proceeded down the street, he was almost entirely silent. The pause was awkward, and Mark broke it by inquiring if Brown had made his appearance in good time.

"I have not seen the rascal's face," was the reply, and again there was silence.

"What is the matter now," thought Mark; "he can surely not pick a quarrel with me. Is it not very odd?" he pursued, aloud.

"Not so odd as some other things, though it is provoking, for he has made off with near fifty pounds' worth of plate; but, Mr Mark Dare, I must ask you a question: you, who are so intimate with this nice family I have unfortunately connected myself with, have probably all along been acquainted with their history?"

"No," replied Mark; "until comparatively lately, I knew nothing of them, except that they were agreeable people with whom to spend an hour."

"Then you are not aware," said Sir Lawrence, "that the father is alive, is a convict, and the proprietor of a gin-shop in Hobart Town?" His tone was of the bitterest sarcasm, but he seemed determined not to shrink from the words, and looked at his companion to see if this was news to him.

"I was aware of their position before you were," Mark replied, quietly, "but certainly not at the commencement of our acquaintance, not until after your marriage."

"You were not aware of it when I was married," repeated Sir Lawrence; "then I have done you an injustice. I supposed you had known it always, and thought how nicely I was taken in; but how did you come at the truth?"

"The Wesleyan minister, who married you, called a

few days afterwards to take me to task for the share I had in the business, and he let out the secret."

"You are clear from blame, I see," said Sir Lawrence. "I am sorry I suspected you; it was only a passing thought. I could not really believe you would let me be so imposed upon; but you have kept it as close as they ever since. Why did you not tell me before?"

"Where would have been the use?" said Mark. "As you were married, I thought it would have been interfering."

"It is a horrid business," muttered Sir Lawrence—"not one of them to be trusted."

"There, I think, you are mistaken," said Mark. "Lady Delafield is very different from the others. I have often thought her too good for them."

"Well, I believe," replied Sir Lawrence, "she is simple enough; there is no great harm in her."

"And she will be entirely removed from the influence of her relations," added Mark, "if, as you gave me to understand, you go to England."

"She will," said Sir Lawrence, thoughtfully; "and I shall take means to prevent her having, in future, any intercourse with them. She told me yesterday that she was willing to go with me to England, and I took that as a proof of her sincerity." Mark's kindness of heart would, under other circumstances, have suggested that it was hard to sever all the ties of nature, to expect her entirely to give up her relations; but, considering what these relations were, he could not but feel that the more complete the separation, the better for her.

This subject having been discussed, and Sir Lawrence did converse upon it with Mark almost confidentially, he returned to that of his servant and the robbery. "You were asking about Brown. The rascal clearly has bolted; and this morning the boatmen made their appearance at the hotel, and said they hoped I would have him punished. After dinner, he had given them each a glass of spirits which, they were sure, was drugged, for, immediately after taking it, they became senseless, and remembered nothing until they awoke in the middle of the night, and found themselves alone, the boat and everything gone."

"And what have you done?" asked Mark—"got a warrant out?"

"No, it is not worth while; I have other things to think of just now." This was another specimen of the easy way in which Sir Lawrence let himself be imposed on; but he excused his negligence by saying, "His sins will find him out. He will come to the gallows some day, and that is a comfort."

When, some hours afterwards, Mrs and Miss Dare called at the hotel, Lady Delafield had gone out with Sir Lawrence to do the shopping necessary before going on board ship, but she had left a message to be delivered, with her love, to Christina. She called at the Pines, in the course of the week, accompanied by her husband, and, on bidding Christina farewell, she kissed her, and said, "I have a favour to ask you, Christina, which is, that you will go to Wooloomooloo the first day you are

at leisure, and give them all my love. You are surprised," she added, in a lowered voice, "but I promised Delafield not to see them again. This was the only condition on which he would take me with him; and if you will explain how it is to mamma, and Jane, and Augustus, I shall be really obliged to you."

This was the last we saw of the Delafields, for the following day we watched the *St George* sailing down the harbour.

I felt and do feel an interest in this poor young creature, whose faults were rather those of education than natural disposition, and truly glad should I be to hear at any period that she were doing well. Sir Lawrence spoke of living with his mother, whom he had more than once mentioned in terms of affection; if she answers, as I have no doubt she does, Mr Bernal's description, I think it probable that this arrangement will prove for Annette the best that could be entered into. Her mind is so plastic that she will always be much influenced by those she is among, and residing with a judicious and well-principled person, who possessed a right to direct her, she might improve; though, before any lasting good impression could be produced, she must needs become painfully sensible of defects and deficiencies of which she is at present regardless, or aware of only with a view to keep them out of sight. But these, under the guidance of better lessons than she has ever yet received, she might endeavour to correct instead of conceal, and learn that in perfect sincerity there is a safety and comfort the most successful duplicity can never attain. Had the case re-

ferred to her sister I should have had no such hope, for Jane is of a far less pliant nature, and by the vitiated society to which she has been for a greater number of years accustomed is more deeply and fatally injured. In forming this opinion I do not feel I am uncharitable, for everything showed that the simplicity and rectitude of Jane's mind was destroyed, and at five-and-twenty she had, I fear, lost the very capability of appreciating the excellence of virtue.

It was now impossible to be very distant with the Philipsons, and I think I am not wrong in saying that the soft flatteries of Jane and her mother were at this time peculiarly acceptable to Miss Dare, as a salve for a wound her vanity received. This was the quiet, though obvious withdrawal of the attention of Mr Bernal. Christina may or may not have intended to follow my advice, and consult a little his tastes and opinions in her conversation; she never again had the same opportunities of frankly conversing with him. He rarely now called at the Pines, and after that unfortunate day of the strawberry gathering, we had various little proofs that he rather avoided meeting us at Mr Hill's.

I often wondered what Christina's feelings were with regard to him, but on this subject she was unusually reserved. She had never spoken of Mr Bernal's attention while it was going on, nor did she allude to it when it ceased. I perceived, however, that she evaded visiting on the North Shore, and under these circumstances Jane Philipson was the companion who most naturally offered to take the place of Louisa Hill. My pupil, indeed, was

too well acquainted with the hollowness of Jane's professions of friendship to place in her any real confidence, but they possessed many subjects of interest in common, and a habit of intimacy once formed is difficult to shake off.

About this time Christina and Miss Philipson had a kind of quarrel, which was not without its consequences. It was patched up almost immediately, but the ill feeling engendered on one side was, I believe, never got the better of. As far as I remember, the circumstance was this. On returning from a drive one afternoon we found Miss Philipson sitting *tête-à-tête* with Mrs Dare, to whom she had rendered herself, by her gossip, flattery, and notice of Albert, so agreeable, that she was pressed to prolong her visit, and avail herself of the carriage to return to Wooloomooloo; Mrs Dare, at the same time that she desired us to take Miss Philipson home, begged us also to go to Government House and write her name, as, owing to indisposition, she had been unable to call since last dining there. No sooner were we seated in the carriage than Miss Philipson declared her intention of inscribing her own name along with Mrs Dare's. I wondered at her assurance, but I believe there was no piece of forwardness too great for Jane to commit in the hope of advancing herself in society. Christina very properly objected, remarking that as no notice had been taken of her when she wrote her name with that of Lady Delafield, it was quite clear that Lady L——m did not wish to reckon her an acquaintance; in short, it would be a liberty she could not

think of using with the Governor's family, and Christina, decided in everything, ended the matter by declaring that unless Miss Philipson consented to remain in the carriage, she would put off fulfilling her mother's request until another day. The habitual self-control which Jane had been taught scarcely sufficed to keep down the expression of her displeasure. Her face crimsoned, and, with a peculiar malevolence in her eye, she exclaimed, "You shall pay for this." The offence was mortal—she *did* revenge it. We supposed the threat a mere explosion of ill temper; little could we suspect it would be long afterwards remembered, and executed by means of the fatal knowledge, alas! but too indiscreetly placed in her power.

By trifling pieces of malice, as well as by more deliberate actions, did Jane betray her spiteful disposition; and even before that drive was over she had done her best to wound Christina. Alluding to the Hills she observed, abruptly, "I don't think you see so much of your dear friends as you used to do. Pray, are you to be one of the bridesmaids?"

"Bridesmaid! To whom?" asked Christina.

"To Louisa Hill, to be sure. The report of her engagement to Mr. Bernal is true, is it not?"

I could not at this moment help glancing at Christina; if she felt anything her countenance did not betray her. She replied calmly that she had not heard of it, but it might be true for all that. My own belief is that Jane Philipson had heard no such report, that it was an impromptu devised on the moment, in the hope of vexing

Christina, to whom at the pic-nic she had seen Mr Bernal devote his attention; not but what Sydney is a most gossiping place, and it is necessary only for a gentleman to go pretty often to a house where there are young ladies to give rise to *on dits*. Be that as it may, I am convinced that such a report, if it existed, was at this time without foundation, though that others besides myself suspected Christina of being not indifferent to Mr Bernal, I had a proof which rather surprised me. As soon as we reached home Christina ran up-stairs, but Mark detained me in the hall, and speaking hurriedly, and with embarrassment, said, "About that report that Jane mentioned, do you think Christina will care?"

I was unprepared for the question, and I felt that Mark did not deserve a commonplace, evasive answer, nevertheless what could I do? I could not compromise Christina, so, as carelessly as I could, I replied, "Christina is very fond of Louisa Hill; I should think she would be pleased to hear of her being happily married." May Heaven forgive me for the only fib I believe I ever told. My fears that Mark Dare would not undergo with impunity the fatigue and exposure attending the pic-nic, were too just. A violent attack of cold and fever was the first effect, and though he recovered sufficiently to return to Crag House at the conclusion of the holidays, he was far from well; on recommencing study he was threatened with a flow of blood to the head, similar to that which had been so dangerous a consequence of his accident. The physician ordered an interval of entire rest from all occupations requiring close application,

and Mark was thus again thrown upon our hands. The whole of each day during this period of idleness was at his own disposal, and there being no person to take any surveillance of the mode in which he employed his time, he was at liberty to select such companions as assisted him to spend the long unoccupied hours. He was recommended to be as much as possible in the open air; and boating in the harbour with Philipson became a favourite amusement. Of the latter he more than once observed to us that the late service he had seen in New Zealand had done him a great deal of good; he thought more of himself, seemed steadier, and was anxious to establish a character.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A BLACK DAY OF RECKONING.

"WHERE did you ride this afternoon, Christina?" Mark inquired, as we sat at tea.

"To the South Head; papa wanted to see if the ship which has been expected from England the last some days was coming in."

"What a fuss papa has been making about that ship," observed Albert; "he sent me at least three times yesterday evening to look at the flagstaff from the window of his dressing-room."

"And no great wonder," added Christina, "considering the bad times. I heard some gentlemen talking of the number of bankruptcies that have been taking place. They mentioned that the house of Abbot & Long, in London, has failed. Papa had some connexion with it. I should fear its having gone to the wall will affect him."

"Have you not thought my uncle looking very ill of late?" asked Mark.

"Very," replied Christina, "dreadfully harassed, and looks, I think, ten years older within the last six months;

and even supposing his own firm is as yet perfectly secure, it is impossible but that so many crashes make him exceedingly uneasy and fearful."

"It may be only that in such precarious times he thinks it right to be prudent; but it is quite clear that economy is the order of the day. I have heard him more than once speaking to my aunt about not being expensive. Were you in the dining-room this morning after breakfast?"

"No, what was said then?"

"Why, they were talking of the stable, and uncle Godfrey spoke as if he intended to sell a horse or two and discharge one of the grooms. Now, depend upon it, there was something in that. To be well-mounted himself, and to see the carriage turn out with a handsome pair, is what he piques himself on, and he never would begin at this time of day to grudge the expense unless he felt he must."

This free discussion of Mr Dare's affairs made me uncomfortable, and I tried, by starting a new subject, to divert them from it. For a few minutes they followed my lead, but then returned to the former topic.

"Suppose my father's affairs were to go to the bad, so that he could not continue as a merchant, what do you think he would do?"

"Try something else; squat, perhaps."

"And live in the bush," exclaimed Christina, "oh, Heaven forbid!"

"Why? it would be the best thing he could do," said Mark, "that is, if he had anything to squat with."

"You have a great horror of the bush both of you," observed I.

"I used to like it when I was there," answered Mark, "but now I think Sydney is twice as jolly, and though some young ladies like the bush, Christina is not the sort of girl it would suit."

"It would be the blackest day of my life when we went to the bush," said Christina. "Conceive living in a place where you saw no one from week to week, and getting so out of the habits of society that when you visited Sydney you were unlike anybody else; take Miss Lyall as a specimen of bush young ladies, I never saw one whom I would not be very sorry to resemble."

"Miss Lyall has had particular disadvantages," said I. "She has lived in the bush nearly all her life, but you are very different; your habits and manners are formed, or nearly so, already, and there is no occasion why, when such is the case, a woman should deteriorate in the bush. She may cultivate tastes, and pursue studies, which improve the mind as well there as anywhere."

"I only know," said Christina, "that I could never be happy cut off from all society, and it has been the dread of my life that we should some day go to the bush."

"It would afford at all events a peaceful, quiet home," said I.

"Peace and quiet do not constitute my ideas of happiness," rejoined Miss Dare.

"So you think now," I said. "God grant, Miss Christina, it is not in the school of adversity that you learn to value peace."

"What do you mean?" asked both the young people together. "Why should you speak so?"

"I mean nothing in particular, but you have yourselves suggested to me thoughts, which we should always keep in view, of the uncertainty of all earthly prosperity."

These two heedless young people had remarked what had escaped my observation, and I was struck with this proof of how much more acute they were than myself. That Mr Dare was looking ill I had indeed perceived, but I attributed it solely to concern for the evidently declining health of his wife. This conversation, however, opened my eyes; in his countenance I now read the traces of deep care, as well as melancholy, and connecting various, in themselves trivial, circumstances, I gathered enough to make me apprehend that the suggestions of my young relations were not mere idle talk. Having by discussing them given a tangible shape to their suspicions, their vigilance was more than ever on the alert, and every trifle or word that appeared like corroboration was laid hold of, and supplied material for much comment. The carelessness with which they handled this very serious subject often surprised me; they treated it as a matter of interest and curiosity, but without seeming to consider what it involved, or to realise the consequences that must follow should they be correct. Knowing the danger of giving rise to surmise on the affairs of a mercantile man, I represented to them the impropriety of such conversations, but my caution they would not regard. On this point they were

as perverse as I had ever found them in their most self-willed moods.

One evening Christina entered the school-room with a face of mystery, and after carefully closing the door, related the following circumstance:—An English vessel had come in that morning, and the letters having been delivered a short time after Mr Dare quitted his office, one of the clerks brought several to his house. She had been in the drawing-room while he perused them, and he looked very grave, and had read portions in an undertone to his wife.

"But Christina," said I, "is it right to speak of what you overheard in that way?"

"I did not overhear it, Miss Norris; why should you say so? Papa saw me sitting there, and had he wished to make any secret he would have sent me out of the room."

I could not help feeling he had probably not observed her, and that at all events she was committing a breach of confidence; but without attending to me she continued, "I caught very little, for he read exceedingly low, but when he had finished mamma looked frightened, and he said, 'Do not alarm yourself, Harriet, if we can keep things quiet for a time all may yet be right, and I am sure that you will assist me in any retrenchments I wish to make.'"

Here was a new fund for conjecture, and to judge by the eagerness with which they brought forward proofs to bear upon one another, it would appear they almost desired the truth of their suppositions; but I had discern-

ment sufficient to know, that such was the impetuosity of their dispositions, that in the excitement of curiosity they frequently overlooked everything for the sake of convincing each other of the strength of their evidence. The conversation proceeded with animation between themselves, for I would take no share in it, until I was no less terrified than astonished to hear Mark say, "Philipson thinks we may imagine a good deal more than there is, from not being in the way of hearing business talked of." Then I exclaimed, "You have not been speaking of all this out of your own family, surely, Mr Mark?"

"To no one but Philipson," replied Mark.

I was more horrified than I can express, and Christina seemed equally so; angrily turning upon her cousin, she said she had never heard of anything so ill-judged. He could not tell what mischief he might do; on such subjects it was of the utmost importance to keep silence. Mark was at first offended, and answered that he had done no harm; even admitting he had been rash, Philipson was as safe as anybody. But only the defective in comprehension are unconvincible, and when Christina, with greater gentleness, enlarged on the imprudence of which he had been guilty, he saw, and frankly acknowledging it, asked if there would be any use in warning Philipson. Christina hesitated, and I replied, "Better not, it will only make him think it of importance; and should he recur to the subject, treat it lightly, so as not to fix it in his memory."

But though Christina was sensible how great, in the

case of another, was the error, she was, alas! not secure from falling into it herself. Philipson repeated to his mother all Mark told him, and the next time we were at her house she exerted her art in sounding Miss Dare. Christina parried the attack as well as she was able, but she was no match for Mrs Philipson, who understood how to ask leading questions, and, before the conclusion of the call, learned enough to show her that Mr Dare's affairs were in a most precarious state. The very arguments Christina had used with Mark I recapitulated to her, but without effect. Dissatisfied perhaps with herself, she tried with many words to prove she had not done wrong, and if she was no match for Mrs Philipson, she could any day overpower me in argument, even though I had reason on my side. The barrier thrown down, the confidences to the Philipsons did not end here, but I have cause to believe that no circumstance which threw any light on the subject was withheld from that family, who, by promises of inviolable secrecy, and assurances of the interest they felt, while they effectually blinded, led on for private ends these unthinking young people from one rash disclosure to another.

At Mrs Philipson's we not unfrequently met some of the Brahams, towards whom Miss Dare always behaved with haughtiness. This conduct, which no forwardness on their part could justify, came to the knowledge of her father, and he took occasion to remark, "As you have been so unfortunate, Christina, as make acquaintance with these people, it is necessary you treat them politely;" and his daughter not seeming inclined to regard the

injunction, he added, "I do not wish to hold out to you any selfish motive for doing right, but I can tell you it is a matter of great consequence that no dislike is taken by the Brahams to our family."

"Why, what can it signify, papa?" asked Christina; "you have nothing to do with old Braham."

"There are connexions in business which you know nothing about," answered Mr Dare, "and, recollect, I am serious."

At this period Christina's actions, commendable or the contrary, were alike the result of mere impulse. At the moment of receiving an injunction from her father she would intend to obey it, but of her duty to him she had not that fixed idea which would actuate her to adhere consistently to what he directed. It needed therefore only temptation to make her break through her promise of observing his wishes relative to the Brahams. She allowed herself to be provoked by their vulgarity, and to exhibit that provocation in a manner tending to stimulate the aversion which they had already conceived for Mark and Christian Dare.

And now my reminiscences have attained the point from whence they supply me with only painful events, though I would that this crisis, distressing as it was, had come sooner, since those young people would not then have had it in their power, by their folly and indiscretion, to injure their family in the way they did.

On returning from a walk, I was informed by the foot-

man who admitted us that Mr Dare desired to speak with me in the dining-room.

"Does papa want to speak to Miss Norris alone?" said Christina.

"Alone, master bid me say, Miss."

This was so unusual a request that I felt something unpleasant was in store. Bad news of my brother was the first idea that presented itself, but that fear was put to flight the moment I saw him; and new apprehensions were excited by the expression of his countenance, and the stiff manner in which he invited me to be seated. I looked at him nervously as I accepted the chair he offered, and faltered, "Is anything the matter, Mr Dare?"

"Yes, Miss Norris, something is very much the matter. I have been told that those people, those Philipsons, with whom my family have been associating, are the children of convicts, and that you are aware of the fact. Is it so?"

Under all circumstances, I must have spoken the truth, and taken thus by surprise I could only answer, "I am."

Mr Dare's face was perfectly white with passion. "And no scruples of conscience," he said, "interfered to prevent your concealing this from me? You, no doubt, believed you were guilty of no breach of the confidence reposed in you; that the acquaintance was one I should sanction!"

He spoke so violently, that I was quite deprived of the power of self-defence, and, with such voice as I had,

I said, "You frighten me, Mr Dare. I cannot just now explain."

He walked impatiently up and down the room. "I do not wish to agitate you," said he; "but perhaps, though you cannot explain, you can answer a few questions. By the correctness of your replies, you may prove whether in the concealment you have acted only a weak part, unpardonably weak, indeed, but it may be so."

The tone in which this was uttered roused me, and I said, "Weak I am, Mr Dare, but not, as you imply, false," and, as far as my memory serves, I will answer your questions with correctness."

Mr Dare seated himself opposite me with the air of a judge. "Were my daughter and nephew, accompanied by yourself, at Mrs Philipson's on the day of the regatta last year?"

"They were, but"——

"I wish no buts, answer me, if you please, yes or no; they did spend that day at her house?"

"Yes."

"And you went with the Philipsons an excursion to Parramatta?"

"We did, but with Mrs Dare's consent."

"I again repeat that I desire simple answers to my questions; and Christina and Mark when there plundered an orange grove, and afterwards bribed the owner's servant to silence?"

Here again my only resource was in perfect sincerity, and I made an undisguised avowal of the truth.

"And worse than all," resumed Mr Dare, with a yet

more threatening aspect, "Mark used the name of my brother in a way to lead Miss Jane Philipson to believe he admired her; he even sent her a letter, and made her suppose it came from his father. She now, I understand—*she*, the convict's daughter—speaks of him as her rejected admirer!"

As I had in one sense sanctioned this folly, I felt I deserved greater blame than for the foregoing transgressions; I, however, said, "I told them it was foolish, but it was intended as an entire jest."

"A jest!" repeated Mr Dare. "Truly, Miss Norris, if you think it proper for a young man to make his father the subject of a jest, and such a jest, our views are different."

"But you are under some mistake, sir; there was no letter, none at least that I ever saw; there were some silly verses—a valentine."

"I have not your nicety in splitting straws, Miss Norris," said Mr Dare; "it is enough that my brother's name was brought forward; and you permitted your pupils to commit such outrages in your very presence, and did not restrain them?"

"Considering their dispositions, sir, it is a mockery to speak of my restraining them."

"Why did you not exert your authority, Miss Norris? I am sure when you accepted the situation of governess to Christina, I invested you with full power. Were you not totally deficient in the strength of mind I believed you to possess, you would have used it to prevent the commission of such enormous faults."

"My authority was a mere name," I said; "it was not acknowledged by Christina, and in no one instance that I could mention did she submit to it."

"Then," said Mr Dare, "your own evidence proves you are incompetent for your situation, and you cannot be surprised that I express a hope you will find your brother's house an agreeable residence, as this can no longer afford you a home."

I was startled, but the indignity gave me a temporary self-command, and as I rose to leave the room, I said, "You will repent, Mr Dare, of this harshness."

"I may, and do deeply regret, Miss Norris," replied Mr Dare, "that I have been so mistaken in your character, but I can never repent of removing my daughter from the charge of a person so unfit to guide her; if we part with less kindly feeling than we met, it is not my fault."

He did not add one word to soften the harshness of this dismissal, and I retired to my own chamber.

Christina was in the school-room; she knocked on the wall and begged me to join her.

"By and by I will come," I said, and commenced preparations for my departure.

My brother had been just appointed to a living in the interior of which he was to take possession in the course of a few weeks. He had been summoned to Sydney on business by the bishop, and Mr Dare had kindly empowered me to invite him to the Pines. He was then, I imagined, on his way to Sydney, so that even if I set out the following day for Wollongong I should miss see-

ing him. All this was particularly unfortunate; and while packing my boxes I scarcely knew what were my intentions. I knew only that I had been all but turned out of the house, and that I could not remain in it an hour longer than was necessary. I was busy with my arrangements, and had been so engaged an hour or more, when I heard Christina's quick step in the passage, and the school-room door bang to, with violence. A moment afterwards a note was delivered to me from Mr Dare. It contained an apology for the excited language he had used towards me; no grounds of displeasure, he said, could justify it, and in the conversation he had subsequently held with his daughter, he was informed of circumstances which led him to believe that, in concealing the situation of Mrs Philipson's family, I had not intentionally acted with duplicity. He proceeded to say, that though his esteem for me as an instructress was diminished, he retained a regard for me as a relation; and while he adhered to his first opinion, that the person who was to be intrusted with the guidance of his very self-willed daughter must possess greater firmness of mind, he was unwilling the world should become acquainted with our private differences, and therefore begged that I would remain in the house as though nothing had occurred, until my brother came to Sydney.

I was far too sensible of what I owed Mr Dare for past kindness not to accept this apology; and had I been of a more unforgiving nature than I believe I am, would for that reason have granted his request. I left

my packing incomplete, and went into the school-room. Christina was there, but on her face was an expression I had never before seen it wear. She had gone straight from her father to seek me; and it was with a violence of which I could not have believed her guilty, that she attacked me for having, as she said, betrayed them.

"My dear Christina," I began.

"Don't call me dear, you don't love me, or you never would have behaved so shamefully; you are a traitor, and have been telling tales on us."

"Miss Dare," said I, "is it in my nature to tell tales? Have you been so long acquainted with me, and yet know so little of my character?"

"When a person supports a double character it is very difficult for any one to know her, and I believe we have been mistaken in yours. We supposed you trustworthy and true to our interest, and in the belief hid nothing from you. We were too sincere to suppose you would take advantage of our frankness to act the spy."

Here her very excitement obliged her to pause, and while she hesitated, at a loss for further expressions to convey the force of her scorn and resentment, I was able to speak and to lay before her a plain and true statement of the case; but to my dismay, I found I was not only doubted, but disbelieved; for the information he had received, Mr Dare, it appeared, did not choose to give up his authority, and she therefore took it for granted it had been given by myself. Her answer was, "That is all very good, Miss Norris; but what can be

said against the stubborn fact of papa being informed of things which you alone know, except Mark and I? He learned them from a person on whose veracity he can rely—that person is yourself."

"Indeed, Miss Dare," said I, "I was as much puzzled where he got his information as you could be."

"Did you deny that we had robbed the orange grove, and been to Mrs Philipson's on the day of the regatta?"

"How could I?" I replied. "He asked me the questions in plain words, and I of course answered them truly."

"And you did not tell one little fib to save us?" said Christina. "We would do that much for you—at least, we would have done so yesterday."

"No, Miss Dare. You said just now you did not know my character, and truly you do not, if you think that I would tell untruths for any one."

"Tell them, no; but you do not shrink from acting them. You do not hesitate to make us believe our secrets safe with you, and so possess yourself of our whole confidence, and then expose it to papa."

Her vehemence completely overcame me, and I said, "I am no match for you in a war of words, but when I am gone you will see your injustice, and, for your own sake, I hope repent of this conduct."

"So you are going!" replied Christina, with a look almost of triumph. "Your manœuvres to screen yourself behind us have not been entirely successful."

In her present mood it was useless to refute any charge, nor was I fit to make the attempt so; without

taking any notice of her last remark, I quitted the room. I was glad I made my escape when I did, for I encountered Mark in the passage, and saw I should have had reproaches to bear from him also. He did not detain me, but said, as he brushed rudely past, "You are a different person from what I took you for, Miss Norris."

Undisciplined as were the tempers of these two young people, I had seen on former occasions that their anger soon exhausted itself. I knew them to be both generous and warm-hearted, incapable, I believed, of nourishing resentment, and I had no doubt but that they would very shortly come to their senses. I remained in my apartment, every moment expecting to hear Christina's step outside the door, but my expectation was vain, my reliance on their good feeling was misplaced. At the hour of tea I was summoned by Albert, and not the slightest notice was taken of me by Mark or Christina, nor was a word addressed to me while we sat at table. I at first tried to conciliate them by trifling remarks, but Mark answered as shortly and gruffly as possible, and Miss Dare did not condescend to reply at all. Albert seemed unable to understand this state of things, and, with a puzzled face, he looked from one to the other, and once or twice said, "Christina, don't you hear Miss Norris speaking to you?" They behaved precisely as though I had not been present, and the little conversation that passed was exclusively between themselves.

"I know what will be the consequence of that letter," observed Mark. "My father will throw me off."

"No, surely not," said I, forgetting everything in my surprise.

"Stories, exaggerated by art and malice," continued Mark, paying me no attention, "are not likely to lose anything from my uncle's pen, and a letter written in the mood he was in when he sat down to write will be pretty strong. I know my father well, and the effect it will have upon him."

"If he does throw you off," said Christina, "what will those have to reproach themselves with who have caused it," and she glanced at me.

"I earnestly wish that anything I could say might remove this misunderstanding," said I, but they rudely interrupted me, "Pray don't talk of misunderstandings, there is no such thing; a person either acts fairly or the contrary."

The interval of a night's rest did not, in any degree, mollify them, and I had to undergo a continuance of this treatment. I do not wish to enlarge upon it, but I felt that were I for many days subjected to the trial, I could not have borne it. Mark confined himself chiefly to negative rudeness, coming into the school-room only at meals, and then occupying himself with a book, or conversing with his cousins. Christina's avoidance was more marked and insulting; she sat mostly in her own room, and if I entered the school-room and chanced to find her there, she immediately withdrew. Albert saw that something was amiss, and perceiving that I was slighted by his sister, he redoubled his attentions to me. The amiability of this little boy's character had long

since attached me sincerely to him, and my grief at leaving the house, where for the last year and a half I had found all my happiness, was nearly as much on his account as on any other. I knew also that he would be really sorry when informed of my intended departure; and as he was yet ignorant of all that had passed, I would not pain him by the intelligence sooner than was necessary. On the morning my brother was expected, he said to me, "I am so glad Mr Norris is coming. Christina and I have several new birds to show him, and he will tell us some more nice stories about England."

"I am pleased you will like to see him," I replied; "but when he returns he will take me away. I am going with him, Albert, up the country."

"Oh, are you? to see his new house," said Albert. "It is natural you should like to see it; but you will come back soon, and tell us all about it."

"I am afraid it will be a very long time before I come back," I answered; "perhaps I never shall."

Albert at first did not understand, and required to be assured that I was not jesting with him, before he would believe I was really going to quit the Pines entirely; and when I convinced him I was quite in earnest, he looked very blank, and begged me to change my mind, and remain.

"If you go away," said he, "I shall perhaps grow again the idle, foolish boy I was when you came, and mamma, and Christina, too, I don't know what they will do without you." Then appearing to remember what he

had observed, he added, doubtfully, "Christina will be sorry, will she not?"

"I think she will, my dear, when I am gone," I replied; "at present she believes she has reason to be angry with me, but she is under a mistake, and by and by she will see it."

"Oh, I thought there was something the matter," said Albert; "she has not been kind to you the last few days." He walked away, but added, speaking to himself, "If they have quarrelled, it must be Christina's fault."

I worried myself a good deal thinking how my brother would receive the intelligence, and laid plans for breaking it to him gently, but when I heard his friendly voice in the hall, I thought only of the pleasure of seeing him. He was shown into our sitting-room, and seemed so happy to meet me that I had not the heart, just at first, to damp his spirits; and when, after our mutual greetings, he began to speak of his new living, I determined to let him talk over his own prospects before I brought forward my grievance.

It was a very wild region to which he was appointed. It had been but lately inhabited at all, and had never hitherto had a clergyman. Having described the district, he told me that his house was only then being built, and it would be long before it were possible to get things at all comfortable. "So which will you prefer, Sarah; to accompany me when I go, and brave the inconvenience and hardship, or remain for a time with your kind friends in this comfortable home?" and he glanced round

the handsome apartment, in which were numberless comforts, and even luxuries. This was the point he had gained when the door opened, and Miss Dare, accompanied by her brother and cousin, entered the room. Albert advanced at once to shake hands with Joseph, saying, frankly, he was glad to see him; but how different was Christina's manner to the person with whom she had been on terms of almost familiarity. Her reception of him was now a slight bow, and a constrained "How do you do, Mr Norris?"

Mark had never before seen my brother, and he stood aloof. Seeing this, Albert, who understood quite well the rules of good breeding, said, "This is my cousin Mark, Mr Norris, you don't know him yet."

"My brother, Mr Mark Dare," said I. Joseph bowed with great politeness, and half extended his hand, but the other made only a careless inclination of the head, and as he moved towards the door informed his cousin that he would be in the garden if she wanted him.

"Stop one moment, and I will go with you," said Christina; "I came here only for my bonnet," and she stretched rudely past me to snatch it. My poor brother seemed quite dismayed, and looked at me to solve the unpleasant mystery. While Albert was present I could offer no explanation, but we were not kept long in suspense, for almost immediately he said, "I will go and tell mamma Mr Norris is here," and left us together.

With Joseph I have no reserve, and I told him everything. And first I informed him of the acquaintance with the Philipsons, how it had progressed, how I had

been unable to check it. As I proceeded, he looked very grave. "That you had no ordinarily self-willed spirits to deal with I can believe, from what I saw just now," he said; "but you acted weakly, I am afraid, Sarah."

"I knew at the time I was weak," I replied, "and I feel it now. I should long ago have spoken to Mr Dare. He only the other day found it out, and—I am to leave." I desired not to suggest the idea that I had been *dismissed*, but my tone betrayed the truth, as I perceived by the flushing of his face, even before he exclaimed, "I understand, you have been turned off like a common servant in disgrace."

My usually placid brother was quite excited, but I laid my hand on his arm and said, "Joseph, how often have you preached to others forgiveness of injuries. We must not forget the kindness that was shown us when we were strangers and friendless in this colony."

"You are right, Sarah;" he bent his head for a moment, and when he again looked up, his countenance wore its habitual mild expression.

"And if," continued I, "I was spoken to with any discourtesy, it has been apologised for, as you will see if you read this note."

We spent two hours uninterruptedly together, and in this time it was arranged that I should return with him the following day to Wollongong, and remain in the cottage he still rented until he had visited his living, and seen how things were progressing.

Mr Dare this evening dined from home, and Mrs Dare

being indisposed did not leave her room; we were therefore dependent on the courtesy of the young people, and I could not have believed that any one who knew so well as Christina what was required would have behaved in the way she did. Mark's neglect of my brother I had less right to resent, since, though I hardly think it, he might under no circumstances have chosen to make his acquaintance. A ceremonious offer of what was on the table was the utmost they addressed to either of us, though they conversed fluently together. They had laid down a line of conduct, and the same determination of purpose as had already led them into so much evil enabled them undeviatingly to adhere to it. The evening was awkward, and would have been still more so had it not been for Albert, who treated Joseph as an old friend, and in his childish way endeavoured to conciliate matters, calling his sister's attention several times to something my brother was telling him, which he thought she would like to hear.

During dinner Albert observed, "I saw such a pretty bird in the hall. Mr Norris, is that the parrot Miss Norris told me you were bringing to Christina?"

Almost any other person would have looked embarrassed on such a question, but Joseph, with his usual quiet simplicity, replied, "I intended to offer that bird to Miss Dare, but for some inexplicable reason I presume it will not now be acceptable."

Christina blushed, and seemed for an instant inclined to relent, but ere she spoke her eyes fell upon me, and recollecting all her imaginary causes of offence she drew

up her head, saying, "You are very good, Mr Norris, but I have lost my taste for birds. I refused a red-shouldered parrot at the market only the other day."

"Oh, Christina," exclaimed Albert, "you know you said you refused it because you were expecting one from Wollongong; and this is such a pretty bird—I am sure, if you saw it, you would like it."

Christina turned her head away, and I whispered, "If you think it pretty, dear Albert, you will not reject it because it is my brother's."

But even the small consolation of Albert's presence Christina grudged us, and as early as she could make an excuse, she told him it was time to go to bed. When formerly in the house, Joseph had read prayers for the young people before they retired to rest, and we had kept up the habit by ourselves, although, for the last two nights, Miss Dare and Mark had refused to attend. Albert now replied to his sister that he supposed Mr Norris was going to read prayers.

My brother answered that he was ready, if his services were wished for.

"We shall not give you the trouble, Mr Norris," said Christina. "Albert will say his prayers by himself. You can say them, Albert, without Mr Norris's assistance."

Joseph possesses the truly Christian spirit which beareth all things, otherwise his temper and patience must have given way under the treatment we received that night, and on his account, I felt many things which, for myself, I could easily have forgiven.

The following morning I was informed by the servant who assisted me to cord my trunks that Mr Dare had been early called from home, and would not be present at breakfast. When I entered the dining-room, Mark had not yet come down, but Christina was pouring out the tea, and Albert helping himself to cold meat at the side-table. The former gave me an almost imperceptible nod, but Albert explained that his father was absent, and would not, he feared, be back before I went; adding, that his sister would not wait.

"I beg pardon, if I am late," I said. "I was finishing my packing, and perhaps time slipped away."

In passing to his chair, Mark glanced at my dress, "Prepared for travelling, I see, Miss Norris."

The remark might have been friendly, but the tone prevented it being so, and my tears almost choked me. This last meal I was ever to partake of in the house, I could not swallow a morsel, though I retained outwardly my composure, and contrived to speak a few words.

The boat for Wollongong left early, and before we had risen from table, the cab arrived which was to convey us to the wharf. Joseph requested me to get ready without delay; then addressing Miss Dare, asked, with some diffidence, if she would be kind enough to explain to her father how much he regretted not seeing him.

"I have a bad memory for messages," answered Christina, coldly. "Albert will deliver it more to your satisfaction."

Joseph turned to Albert, while I likewise intrusted to

the little boy a note which I had prepared for his father. I was by no means sorry not again to meet Mr Dare, as I was able on paper to thank him for past kindness better than I could have done in words, when struggling with agitation, and chilled, probably, by his harsh manner.

I put on my bonnet, completed my little preparations, then being informed by the lady's-maid that Mrs Dare desired to see me, I went to her room. For the last some days she had been much indisposed, on which account her husband had thought proper not to enlighten her as to the exact cause of my departure.

"Ah, Miss Norris," said she, raising herself in bed, and extending her hand, "so you are going. It is rather sudden, is it not? But it is all right and natural that you should like to see your brother's new parsonage. Albert was telling me all about it. Well, I am sorry we are to lose you; you have been a great comfort to me, and I am sure you have done your duty by the young people."

Of the deception under which she laboured I took no notice, but warmly thanked her for the kindness I had received since I had been an inmate of her house, and expressed a hope of her being speedily restored to health. Her last words were—

"You will write to Christina, I know, and she will write to you, long letters."

How strange it is, thought I, as I quitted her, that this person who, during my residence under her roof, has been the most indifferent towards me of the family,

is, on my departure, the only one, with the exception of little Albert, who shows me any kindness.

But I had yet to take leave of my pupils, and I hardly expected that they would refuse me, when the final moment arrived, a friendly farewell. No; their animosity was retained to the last. When the clock warned us that it was time to start, Miss Dare curtsied to us both, and, in a tone of the most distant politeness, said, "Good morning, Mr Norris. Good-bye, Miss Norris; I hope you will have a pleasant journey."

"Miss Dare," said I, "I cannot part thus; will you not shake hands?"

"I have already wished you good morning, Miss Norris," was the reply. "There is my mamma's bell," (a bell she was very little in the habit of regarding,) "I must go and see if she wants me." She walked to the door, but, as she paused at it an instant, a presentiment that evil hung over the house came across me. Summoning all my self-command to speak steadily, I said, "Stop one moment, Miss Dare. Although you do part with me so coldly, I must retain always a grateful recollection of the kindness I once received from you; and, remember, if ever I can be of the smallest use to you, you have only to command my services." Whether she heard me, I know not, for before I had ceased she had closed the door.

Mark behaved a shade less badly; he assisted, though with a face the most grave and immovable, to place the boxes in the fly, and touched, barely touched, my hand at parting. To preserve composure through such a part-

ing with pupils whom I yet truly loved, required an effort which I could not for long have supported, and when it was over, my feelings so completely conquered me that not even the pleasure of being with my brother could that day restore me to anything like cheerfulness.

But the next morning we reached our destination, and I found myself in Joseph's little cottage, with once more the occupation of providing for his comfort, and every prospect of some weeks' uninterrupted peace, and quiet enjoyment of his society.

CHAPTER XXV.

WOLLONGONG.

CURIOUS was the novelty of finding myself in a cottage such as that which Joseph occupied at Wollongong, so entirely deficient was it in all that constitutes our ideas of English comfort. Until I went to the Pines I had never lived in a large, luxurious house, but I had been accustomed to the perfection of neatness, and bare walls, clay floors, rough, unpolished furniture, I had never seen among the hardships entailed on a gentleman by narrow means. But I was not so foolish as allow these inconveniences seriously to annoy me, and they were small in comparison of the pleasure I derived from seeing that Joseph's exertions to do good had not been thrown away. Of this I judged principally from the respect and esteem in which he was held, and the attentions bestowed for his sake on myself. I made acquaintance with several families of his parishioners, and so hospitably disposed were they, that when he set out on his journey I received several kind offers of house-room in his absence; but I did not choose to spunge upon strangers, however friendly, and preferred retain-

ing the cottage. The attention shown me was something quite different from what at home I had been accustomed to see bestowed upon strangers. How long would it be before a person settling in an English neighbourhood would find doors open to receive her for days, or even weeks together. In spite of all her benevolent institutions and splendid liberality, England may not unjustly be accused of coldness in domestic life; the stranger's claims are unacknowledged; philanthropy embraces only public good, or exercises itself in an exclusive circle. But in this new country, where so many at first are friendless, the hearts of Englishmen seem to open, and they feel for others in situations similar to those they may have themselves been in. I was far from condemned to solitude or dulness; and while doing the little that was in my power to supply Joseph's place, by visiting the sick and afflicted in the small community, I was, I hope, not altogether useless, and the absence of excitement in daily life was what best suited my nature, and I had ever liked.

I was much struck with the beauty of the district of Illawarra. Though south of Sydney the scenery is more tropical, and the moist heat of the climate produces a much richer vegetation; on the other hand, portions of the land are cultivated as in England, and green fields and waving corn put me in mind of home.

The town of Wollongong stands at the foot of a range of mountains, the highest of which are Mount Keera and Mount Kembla. It consists of scattered cottages and huts, for the most part of wood, and faces the sea, from

whence a belt of magnificent surf breaks upon the sandy beach. From the intense heat of the weather I was usually glad to remain indoors during the day, when I had plenty of occupation in packing carefully the books and household goods we intended removing to our new abode, but in the evenings I was frequently invited to accompany one or two of Joseph's parishioners in a drive, by which means I saw more of the surrounding country than I could otherwise have done. I remember one lovely evening, driving along the broad road up Mount Keera, and looking down into a valley filled with great palm trees, which seemed to transport me at once to the Tropics. The nettle-tree, of which I had before heard as a remarkable Australian curiosity, was pointed out to me; it appears to be a kind of palm, the leaf is immensely broad — three or four feet in diameter, I should think, very handsome, but the lower side stings frightfully. As a proof of the luxuriant vegetation, some of the trees were so enveloped in creepers as to be completely concealed, or even killed by them. One I particularly noticed, which, having smothered the branches of a gum-tree in its dark shining foliage, shot its stems down to the ground, and again sprang up like a banian. Another remarkable production of these parts is the fire-tree, so called because, not its flowers, but its leaves are flame-coloured. There also I heard the bell-bird, whose very peculiar note, like the tinkling of a silver bell, pleases, from both its novelty and sweetness. But I am prosing on about trees and scenery, instead of proceeding with my story.

Although the distance was not in reality great, we were little in the way of hearing what passed in the Sydney world of fashion, and the supply of newspapers was very irregular. Concerning the proceedings of Mr Dare's family I remained quite in the dark, for I had no correspondent to whom I could look for information; but while few things would have interested me so much as news of them, I satisfied myself with the reflection that any event of importance would certainly become public, and probably reach my ears.

The first circumstance connected with my friends that came to my knowledge was the marriage of Louisa Hill to Mr Bernal. I read the announcement in one of a batch of papers lent me for perusal, and anxiously did I think of Christina, and conjecture whether or not this would give her pain; but I was not long at liberty to indulge the speculation; for another, far more distressing, soon engrossed all my powers of thought. In the next paper I took up was an account of the Mayor's fancy-ball, and a long list of the company present. This did not interest me, and I glanced down the column to the succeeding paragraph, where my eye was caught by the words, "Daring Robbery!" I have always a sympathy with those who have been robbed, and I read the detail. It told that two young men, whose rank in life ought to have placed them much above the commission of such outrages, had been apprehended for having, on the night of the Mayor's ball, attacked and robbed a carriage, in which were ladies, on a retired part of the Newtown road; the one was the nephew of an eminent merchant

in Sydney, and the other a midshipman in one of H.M. ships then in harbour. My heart misgave me; the fear that flashed upon me could hardly be correct, and yet the coincidence—the nephew of the eminent merchant and the midshipman in the navy—was too suspicious. But other merchants might have nephews residing with them who had friends among the officers of the ships in harbour; so I tried to convince myself, yet there was something in my mind, and in the evidence, against which I found it vain to struggle, and the more I dwelt upon it the more wretched I became, from the pressing conviction that the love of frolic and reckless spirit of Mark Dare had at last brought him into trouble which might, and probably would, affect his whole earthly prospects.

A threatened misfortune is often accompanied by a presentiment, a sensation, which, before we receive corroboration, persuades us of its reality. So it was with me. In vain, during the night, I endeavoured to shake off my fears; and the morrow brought confirmation. At an unusually early hour a gentleman, with whom I was acquainted, called, and produced a letter he had received the previous evening, which mentioned that Mark Dare and Augustus Philipson had been taken up on the above charge. The belief was that it was a jest, got up when they were under the influence of wine; but there were circumstances which rendered it doubtful whether this could be made evident. Philipson having been found with stolen jewels in his possession, it was difficult to imagine robbery had not been intended.

I could picture the state in which the family would be plunged. Mrs Dare, I knew, would take to bed, as she always did under any agitation, and fancy herself, or in this case most likely be, very ill; Albert, when his mother was unwell, usually devoted himself to her; and Christina would be left alone to the misery of her own reflections; she would not like to quit the house, and would have no one person to whom to turn for comfort. At such a time I might be of some use to them, and earnestly did I wish I could offer my services. While looking out for the next supply of papers, which would probably give some further information, I chanced, at the house of a friend, to meet a gentleman who was rather intimate at the Pines, and, the case having naturally excited considerable sensation in Sydney, he entered at once on the subject. From him I learned that the young men had been released from custody after undergoing an examination before a magistrate, corroborating circumstances having testified to the truth of the story they told, and made it evident that no crime had been intended. I begged Mr Gervoise to tell me as much as he knew of the affair, and, in compliance, he related particulars which filled me with shame to think of such disgrace coming upon Mark. The facts of the case appeared to be these: Mark and Philipson had gone together to the Mayor's fancy-ball in the dress of brigands, and, while walking home, one remarked to the other that it would be a lark to act in character, and frighten the people in some carriage. Both, they subsequently confessed, were heated with wine, which may account for

their not realising the trouble into which such folly must inevitably bring them.

They turned down the Newtown road, and sprang out of the first carriage that passed, Mark seizing the horses' heads, and Philipson presenting his make-believe pistol, demanded, "Your money or your lives." A lady, in great terror, tore off her brooch, and put it into his hand, and the coachman, who was unprovided with any means of defence, lashed his horses, and drove rapidly on; but before he had gone far he gave the alarm to two policemen, who, being put at once on the right road, came upon the young men while they were laughing over the terror they had caused, and conjecturing the name of the lady and her place of abode, that they might restore the brooch. Both were taken to the lock-up, where they spent the night, and though the following day the affair was hushed up, Philipson, at all events, paid a severe penalty for his exploit, being expelled the navy.

Mr Gervoise was proceeding to mention that Philipson and his father were gone, or going to California; but I, interrupting him, said, "I am more interested in Mr Dare's family; can you tell me anything further about them?"

Mr Gervoise looked very grave. "I have nothing, I fear, satisfactory to tell you; you must indeed prepare yourself for some bad news. Mrs Dare is dangerously ill, and Mr Dare's affairs, it is well known, are most disordered; his character is unimpeached; but—these are sad times."

This was indeed a shock, and recalling the imprud-

ence of Miss Dare, I could not but be very apprehensive that her foolish disclosures to the Philipsons had done harm. Under these accumulated distresses, I could not sit down patiently, and I resolved to offer my services to wait upon Mrs Dare, and attend to Christina. They could but be rejected, and I should feel easier when I had done the little in my power to show my sympathy and gratitude for past kindness. I considered in what shape my offer would be most likely to be accepted. Had Mrs Hill been in Sydney, I would have made it through her; but she, almost immediately after her daughter's marriage, had gone to spend a few weeks at Newcastle with Fanny, who had been suffering ever since the hot weather set in, and, it was hoped, would benefit by change of air. Mrs Lancefield was in England.

My final resolution was to write to Albert. He had begged me to do so, and I requested him to answer my letter as soon as possible, to tell me everything about his family, and whether his mother or his sister had ever expressed the smallest regret that I had left them. This letter I gave in charge to Mr Gervoise, who promised to post it in Sydney on his return thither. His wife and children were spending the summer at Wollongong, and he visited them as often as his business would permit; I therefore looked forward to seeing him again before very long, and hearing further tidings of my cousin's family, should I, contrary to my expectations, not previously receive Albert's reply.

Three weeks or more passed, and my letter was unacknowledged. I was disappointed, but the reason was

explained on the reappearance of Mr Gervoise. With unaffected concern in his manner, he said he was quite ashamed to meet me. He had been intrusted with several other letters, and believed he had deposited them all safely in the post-office. It was not until he was on board the steamer that he discovered mine had somehow escaped from the package, and was then in his carpet-bag. He returned it to me with many apologies, and hoped that his negligence was not of material consequence. This time he was able to give me little intelligence, beyond that Mrs Dare was still alive.

This state of suspense was so unsatisfactory, that I was strongly tempted to go to Sydney upon chance, but there was no person whom I could conveniently leave in charge of my brother's house, and I put off from day to day, always hoping to hear something that should decide me how to act.

Thus almost the whole period of Joseph's absence elapsed. I heard that he had set out on his homeward journey, and was in daily expectation of seeing him, when there reached me a sad confirmation of my fears for Mrs Dare. I had seen no newspaper for a considerable interval, the steamboat having been delayed by bad weather; and in the earliest of a batch of *Heralds* it at last brought was the announcement of her death. The event was past some weeks, and I resolved then, at all hazards, to go without delay to Sydney.

I confided my intentions to some friends residing near, and taking what steps I could to secure the safety of the luggage left by Joseph in my charge, I went on board

the vessel on her return trip. But the bad weather that had before detained her was not over, and the passage, which is generally made out in one day, occupied four. We were forced to run into a small bay on the coast, and there we lay for two nights. The wind and a heavy sea were against us, and as usual sickness so overcame me that I was unable to leave my berth.

It was quite evening when we arrived at our destination, a dark uncomfortable night, not unlike that of the Delafields' memorable pic-nic. As soon as we landed I procured a fly, and, as my only line of conduct, proceeded at once to the Pines. I will not say that I was free from solicitude respecting my reception, for well did I know the pride and determination of those whom I was to meet. I knew that they might consider me an intruder, and as such repulse me. But these reflections did not more than glance across my mind. The sorrow in which I should find my relatives was what principally engaged my thoughts.

The absence of light in any of the front windows struck me as I drove up; the family, I supposed, had secluded themselves in the retired apartments at the back. I alighted, and, before ringing, dismissed the fly. My application to the bell was not answered, and I had to repeat it several times ere any notice was taken within. At length the door was opened by a strange man, evidently not a servant, who, in a surly voice, demanded what I wanted. I replied that I desired to see Miss Dare, and he suffered me to enter.

The hall was littered with straw and packages of every

size and description; tables and chairs, which I recognised as belonging to the different rooms, were piled one upon another, and everything told of some great and terrible change. I walked a few steps along the passage, but the door of the dining-room being open, I perceived that it was divested of its carpet, almost entirely stripped of furniture, and another man was lounging on the table with a pipe in his mouth. A great smell of spirits and of tobacco smoke came from the apartment, and turning to the former person, who was securing the door, I exclaimed, "Good heavens! what is all this?"

"Nothing unusual when there is an execution in the house," was the reply.

For a moment I felt almost stunned, but recovering myself I said, "Are Mr and Miss Dare in the house?"

"I believe they are in some of the upper rooms," said the man; and, going into the dining-room, he left me, without further direction, to pursue my search. I groped my way up-stairs, for it was nearly dark, and every room I examined seemed deserted. The drawing-room, school-room, and Miss Dare's own chamber, I went to successively, but there was nothing to betoken the house being inhabited. Having been over every part, with the exception of the attics, I paused at the foot of a flight of stairs I had never before ascended, and which led to the rooms formerly occupied by the female servants. I felt convinced that I had been misinformed, and that Mr Dare and his family had taken refuge elsewhere.

While I was deliberating, a faint glimmer, beneath one of the doors, caught my eye, and, mounting the stairs forthwith, I listened for some voice or movement in the chamber. All was silent. This was no time to be withheld by fear of misapprehension, so, repressing all doubt of whether I was doing right, I unceremoniously entered.

The light proceeded from a solitary dip-candle which, stuck in a bottle, burned on the deal table. A few chairs and a dilapidated couch were the only additional furniture the garret contained. There was a handful of fire in the grate, and before it, with a frying-pan in his hand, cooking some mutton chops, stood Mark Dare, I at first believed, the only person present. He turned on hearing the door open, and on seeing me, his countenance betrayed no emotion either of surprise, anger, or satisfaction. It wore an expression of imperturbable gloom which told (how painfully!) that bitter and accumulated misfortune had concentrated his every feeling. I advanced a few steps, and, as he still did not speak, said timidly, "I came in search of Miss Dare; I was told I should find her here."

"She is here," replied Mark, looking towards the couch in a dark corner where was seated his cousin, her arms crossed, her head dropped on her breast, and her long hair falling loosely about her. "Poor thing, she has undergone a great deal, and now she is quite done up."

At the sound of his voice, Christina raised her head—I suppose she had been asleep—and, with an air of be-

wilderment, she glanced around. Before I had time to speak, her eye fell on me. She started to her feet, and for a moment regarded me with surprise; then, dashing her hair back from her face, said, "Miss Norris! is it possible? You are come, no doubt, to triumph over us in our misfortunes, to enjoy the fulfilment of your own prophecies."

"You, no doubt," added Mark, "are very happy to see to what our folly has brought us, but we shall be happier to see you at some other time." He eyed me angrily, and Christina proudly drew up her figure, and both seemed waiting for me to quit the room. Their tones and looks cut me to the very heart. If they were not softened by adversity, what could I hope; and, unmindful of their signs towards the door, I sank into a chair, and gave free vent to my feelings.

Mark appeared struck mute with astonishment. Christina also looked at me intently; at last she said, "Is it then possible you feel for us?"

"Feel for you, Christina!" I repeated. "Is such a question necessary? Can I see you in affliction such as this, and not feel for you more than language can express?"

This simple and spontaneous avowal seemed to effect an entire change in the girl. She said nothing, but threw herself into my arms, and, as she hid her face on my shoulder, shed the first tears in which, since the beginning of her misfortunes, her feelings had found relief. Mark stood beside us, and when my own and her agitation had a little subsided, he grasped my hand, saying,

"Ah! Miss Norris, you have not waited for our apologies to forgive us."

During the first quarter of an hour, I was too much taken up with themselves to think of either Mr Dare or Albert; though, having understood from the man below that the former was in the house, I soon prepared myself to see him; and when Christina was again tranquil, and Mark had resumed his occupation, I said, "Where is Albert? Is he with your uncle, Mr Mark?" Mark turned away, and did not directly reply—

"No," he said, with averted face; "Albert is alive—he is at school."

"Good God," said I, "is your uncle then gone?" Mark's looks answered in the affirmative.

My feelings were now in a state that I fancy is not uncommon in the midst of trials which have followed each other in rapid succession, with scarcely an interval of breathing-time. It is a kind of temporary insensibility, produced by repeated shocks, and prevents us feeling a blow which, had it come singly, would have caused the most poignant grief. My keenest sympathy had been already called out for my young relations, and the knowledge of this fresh calamity could hardly awaken a new sensation. So it was, I saw, with even Miss Dare and Mark. Had Christina suffered under the loss of one parent alone, I believe that, while it was so recent, she would have been inconsolable, but now that the shaft of death had deprived her of father and mother, simultaneously with the crash of their fortunes, she had all her energies collected, and was forming plans for her

future life; but of this I was not as yet aware. I remarked only that she was pale and worn-out, and that thought and care had imparted to her countenance an expression which made it scarcely to be recognised as that of the gay, volatile, and wilful Christina Dare.

But the full extent of the cup of sorrow of which they had drank was not, even yet, known to me. Mr Henry Dare being their natural guardian, I thought it strange that they were thus desolate and unprotected in Sydney, and I asked Mark if he had written to his father.

His reply was, "I shall probably never write to him again."

"But he knows what has happened?"

"Yes."

"And you are going home?"

"Home!" rejoined Mark, with a smile which, in its bitterness, was almost diabolical, "where is my home? —not in my father's house assuredly. Albert is now his adopted son, and I am thrown an outcast on the wide world."

There was a long silence, during which Mark's dark features worked with all those fierce emotions which harsh or unkind treatment awaken in a nature like his, and I thought that if this boy, in after-life, cast aside every principle, disregarded the laws of God and man, and pursued recklessly a career of vice, it might have to be answered for by him who, as he had ruined his earthly prospects, had marred a character capable of attaining to true excellence. He tried, however, to be cheerful, though ghastly was his smile and hollow his

attempted laugh. Christina sat at the table with her head resting upon it, and when her cousin called attention to his cookery, and pressed us to partake with him, she was unable to touch a morsel.

I had in my head a plan, but it was not quite matured, and I resolved to defer mentioning it until the morrow; circumstances, however, decided me to propose it that night. The table was littered with several pieces of paper, memoranda, &c., and taking up one, without thinking what I was about, I read, "Wants a situation as governess——," then, recollecting myself, I begged pardon, and laid it down.

"You can read that, Miss Norris," said Christina, "the advertisement is in the *Herald* of to-day. I hope to-morrow to get an answer to it. I am old enough to be a governess, and I believe I am sufficiently well educated. Do not you think I am fit for a situation?"

"That is a serious question, Miss Dare," I replied; "as far as acquirements go, certainly; but the requisites for a governess involve so much, and whether you possess them I perhaps ought not to express an opinion; you know how I have failed as a governess."

"Ah! Miss Norris," said Christina, "it was your very goodness and kindness that made you fail; you could not bear to give pain; and though I would not be so vain as to compare myself to you in many respects, there is one point on which I think I might do better; I am sure I would not allow my pupils to act in a way of which I disapproved. I could assert my own will."

There were other reasons. I had doubts whether any

lady would willingly trust her children to a young person who had proved so incompetent to guide herself; but it was not a time to state this objection, so I dropped the subject, saying, "And you have really sent this to the newspaper? Well, my dear, we must wait patiently for the result."

"Yes, that will be best," said Christina; "we will not talk of it to-night. What a comfort it is to have you here!" and she took my hand and held it.

From time to time Mark glanced anxiously at his cousin, and at last he observed, "You must cheer up a bit, Christina, it will never do to have you looking so woe-begone to-morrow; people would be frightened to engage you as a governess. You would be better if you took a mutton-chop."

Christina smiled faintly, but shook her head.

"She will be better, I trust, in the morning," said I, after she has had some sleep."

"Well, I will go directly," replied Mark, "I have just finished; I shall leave her comfortably, Miss Norris, now you are here."

His tone was quite affectionate, as was also Miss Dare's towards me, and I thought this a good opening to speak of the project in my mind.

"Your kindness," I said, "encourages me to ask a favour of you, of you both, one which I have been hesitating to mention."

"What favour can you possibly have to ask of us?" they inquired; "you are surely mocking us; we can grant nothing; we have no longer anything in our power."

"Allow me to tell you what it is. In the course of a few days I am to accompany my brother to the bush. I shall be very lonely up there, for he will be away from me a great deal, and it would be such a comfort if you would consent to go with us. It is, I am aware, asking a good deal, as it is a long way, and we shall have things at first very much in the rough, but you are both so kind that I think you will not refuse."

The artifice was simple, and I might have known it would be detected; they were far too clear-sighted to be blinded by it for an instant, though they understood my motive, and a look of pleasure passed over the face of each.

Christina kissed me, and replied, "No, Miss Norris, that won't do, the remembrance of my misconduct could never be out of your mind, as I am sure it never could be forgotten by me, although you have returned good for evil in coming to see us here."

"Christina," said Mark, "do not be too hasty; Miss Norris, I see, has forgiven us long ago. For me, you know, Miss Norris, with a thousand thanks which can never express my gratitude, I am independent, I have a strong pair of hands, and can earn my own living; but Christina—poor girl, I should be much happier if she were with you."

"But might it not be as well," I said, "to take time to consider of your profession, Mr Mark? and you could pursue your studies with my brother until you had weighed the subject."

"My mind is made up," replied Mark; "there is but

one line of life open to me. I am not sufficiently well educated for anything but a bushman; I must reap the reward of my idleness, and neglect of study, but I am competent to be an overseer, and shall look out for such a situation; it will afford me an honest livelihood, at all events."

The calmness with which this was said was astonishing, and I admired the strength of purpose which thus triumphed over all former tastes and prejudices. Such resolution it would have been wrong to attempt to shake, and I again turned to Christina,—but she must await, she said, the answer to her advertisement; and seeing that I should have more chance of gaining my point by not urging it then, I postponed pressing it, and proposed to Miss Dare that she should try and take some rest. Mark accordingly bade us adieu, and retired to the cellar he was allowed to occupy.

Almost as soon as she lay down on the couch weariness overcame Christina, and she sank into a deep sleep, while I sat by the fire to keep it up, "chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancies."

CHAPTER XXVI.

FAREWELL TO THE PINES.

I BELIEVE I had slept, though not aware of it myself, for I was roused by hearing Christina exclaim, "Is that mamma's bell?" I started up and awakened her from what had become a troubled slumber.

"Christina, dear, it is morning, you had better rise. I hope you feel refreshed?"

She looked for a moment vaguely round her, pushed the hair back from her face, then murmured, "I remember," and sank back on the bed. In a few minutes, however, she rose, and I offered to assist her to dress, but this she declined, saying, very gravely, that she must learn to do everything for herself. While she was thus engaged, and I observed with pleasure, as a good sign, that she seemed able this morning to attend to personal neatness, I busied myself making the room tidy, and preparing some sort of breakfast. Mark had set by some mutton chops, and the baker calling, I ran down-stairs to secure a loaf; I procured also a little tea, and with the supply returned to the garret. Christina's

simple toilette was completed, and she drew my attention to the way in which she had disposed of her hair, asking if braids did not make her look more womanly.

"They become you very much, dear," I replied, though I could scarcely suppress a sigh of regret for the beautiful auburn curls which used to fall in such luxuriance round her face; the braids gave it a very different character; she looked, perhaps, more regularly handsome, but the reckless expression, which the long ringlets had aided, was entirely gone. So elastic, however, were her spirits that even yet they were not wholly crushed, and turning to me with a smile, not a very bright one, alas, she said, "I do not think Mark will say I look woe-begone to-day."

Mark was late of joining us, and in his appearance there was not the improvement that rejoiced me in his cousin's. He was more depressed than on the previous evening, but he congratulated her on her recovered cheerfulness, and gave me a friendly greeting. I had set out the breakfast to as much advantage as was compatible with the absence of a cloth, and a paucity of plates, knives, and forks. Mark smiled pleasantly, and glancing at me, said, "The good fairy Albert used to speak about has been at work here." He ate hardly a morsel, however, and seemed preoccupied, but the reason of this was obvious, when, on the meal being concluded, he produced an answer to Christina's advertisement. Mark had learned consideration, and he delayed giving it her until she had recruited her strength by eating something. There were two notes, the one

from a lady in good circumstances, moving in the best society of Sydney, but with whom Mrs Dare had happened not to be acquainted; the other was from the wife of a rich shopkeeper.

Having perused both the notes, she handed them to Mark and myself, and her first words were, "I'll lose no time; will you go with me, Miss Norris?"

"I will, my dear," I replied, and we prepared for the walk.

We proceeded to the house of the first-named applicant, Christina being very anxious to obtain that situation. There we were shown into the dining-room, and had not long to wait before the lady entered. She was a tall, prepossessing-looking young woman, with well-bred, pleasing manners, untinged by either haughtiness or that condescension which is even more galling to a dependant; and the smile with which she addressed us was so sweet, that I felt assured in her family a governess would be subjected to no unnecessary rubs or mortifications.

It distressed me to hear Christina catechised, as was of course requisite, on her attainments, though, as she was to take a situation, this one appeared more than usually eligible, and her answers seemed to give satisfaction, until the other observed that she did not know the name of the lady to whom she had the pleasure of speaking.

Christina drew a card from her bag, and presented it. Although she and Mrs Bright were not personally acquainted, it was scarcely possible for people belonging to the same set in Sydney not to know each other by

sight, and it was only the change of her sober manner and braided hair that prevented her being before recognised. The lady read the name, then said, hesitating, "Miss Dare of the Pines?"

"The same," replied Christina.

Mrs Bright looked embarrassed, and said, hastily, "Oh, I think you are too young, Miss Dare, I require a very steady governess."

"I am steady enough now," replied Christina, in a somewhat unsteady voice. "On that point, I do not fear you would have reason to complain."

"I think the situation would not suit you," resumed the other; "we should neither of us be easy."

"Why not?" asked Christina, quickly. The lady half evaded giving her reason, "You have been accustomed to a great deal of liberty, Miss Dare."

The truth flashed upon her, and as the colour mounted to her very temples, she said, "I am to understand then that you wish no further conversation?"

"I am sorry you have had the trouble of calling," said the lady, who, I saw, felt for the individual, yet dared not confide her children to the care of a young person against whom she had heard disadvantageous reports. "My children are rather troublesome; the boys are inclined to be rude, and I should prefer an elderly person as governess. Good morning."

"Well, I have still a chance," said Christina, as we quitted the house; "but do you think it worth while to make the other call?"

"Indeed, my dear, I do not. You had much better

agree to my proposal, and go with us into the country. You know the pleasure it would give me, and though the life offers no great inducement I can make you more comfortable than you can be living among strangers."

"Don't press me, Miss Norris," said Christina. "If, by any means, I can earn my own living, I will. Let us go to the ironmonger's house."

The distance was not great, and we had proceeded nearly the whole way in silence when Christina observed, "Independent of the motive I have just named, Miss Norris, there is another reason why I could never consent to be a burden on you and your brother. It is impossible he should ever forgive our insolent behaviour. You are so good and kind that I believe you do not now think of it; but our rudeness to him was, if possible, more entirely uncalled for and without excuse."

"My brother, Christina," I replied, "is a Christian minister, and, believe me, he practises the duties he preaches. I will answer for it that whatever little unkindness you may, under the influence of a misapprehension, have shown him, did not, even at the moment, excite his anger, and that, so far from resenting it, he will be truly happy if you consent to my wishes."

But Christina was at this time energetic in the pursuit of one object, and nothing that I could say would have induced her to relinquish her determination of maintaining herself.

The tradesman to whom was our present application lived in a large handsome house, but it was evident that the establishment was not so well ordered as in the other

family, for the door was opened by a very slipshod servant-maid, who, saying, "Oh, you are the governess as was expected," ushered us into a sitting-room, and went to tell her "missis."

The person who appeared in consequence of the message may have been, and very likely was, a worthy and respectable member of the class to which she belonged, but neither in manner nor appearance was she superior to what might have been expected from her rank in life, and I shrank from the prospect of Miss Dare living as a dependant with one whose vulgarity was visible in the first words she spoke.

"You are the young woman who put the advertisement, signed D. C., into the *Herald?*"

"Yes," replied Christina, composedly; "I call in consequence of a note received in answer to it this morning. I am desirous of obtaining a situation, and shall be glad if I can please you, and if your situation will suit me."

"Well, I think it very likely we shall suit. You seem a very proper sort of young person, and you will have a very comfortable situation, I can tell you; for the governess is not required to do anything, except see to the children."

"What are the ages of your children?" asked Christina.

"The eldest is nine; she don't know much yet, and she is a bit of a romp, but you'll teach her better."

"I should endeavour to do so. How many are there?"

"Five; the baby, as we still call him, is not more than able to walk, but you will have to look after them

all,—that is, when I don't want them myself; and I go out a good deal, and don't like to leave them with servants."

"Of course not," replied Christina; "very right."

"And what salary do you expect?" pursued the woman.

Christina hesitated, and I, seeing she was determined to take the situation, and would close at once with any offer, thought it right to put in a word. "This young lady," I observed, "is more accomplished than the generality of governesses to be met with in Sydney, and will expect a good salary."

"Well, we means to give twenty-five pound, and that's a good sum. Maybe in your last place you had more, as you seem rather a fine lady, but we reckons this a very easy situation. You'll have a comfortable home."

"Then I may reckon——" Christina began. Her face was dyed in crimson, though otherwise no emotion was visible; but, before she finished the sentence, the woman, who for the last minute had looked at her sharply, said, "But I don't know who I am speaking to; be so good as tell me your name."

"My name is Dare," replied Christina.

"Good gracious! Miss Dare, lately of the Pines? I thought I knew your face. Oh, no; you would never suit us."

"You can hardly tell whether I shall suit you as yet, I should think," said Christina, gently.

"No, no, Miss Dare, we are quiet people, and I knows enough of your goings on. You have not lived so quietly at the Pines but that we have heard a goodish little about

you, and I knows very well that you will never suit us. We must have a *quiet, respectable* young person."

"I believe, indeed, that we shall not suit," answered Christina; "I wish you a good-morning," and without waiting for any further words, she walked from the room.

No sooner, however, had we gained the street than her spirit gave way, and I saw how painful was the effort by which she controlled her agitation. I offered her my arm, but attempted no consolation, for I knew not what to say; in her prospect I could discern no cheering opening.

At the door of the Pines we met Mark, watching for our return. He allowed Christina to pass him, but detained me, and anxiously inquired if anything had been arranged.

"Neither of the situations suit," I replied.

"Thank God for that," said Mark, with a look of relief. "Now, Miss Norris, she will, perhaps, accept your kind offer; if you do not repent having made it, I will say all I can think of to influence her."

I now applied myself very seriously to obtain Christina's consent. Every argument that occurred to me I brought forward, even saying that if she liked, by and by, to make herself useful, I should not prevent her. Mark aided my persuasions with his advice, but we both failed. Christina expressed a great deal too much gratitude to me, but was not shaken in her intentions; she insisted that the advertisement should be repeated in the paper, and declared that if she did not succeed in getting a governess's situation, she would take a place as nursery or lady's maid.

I had this afternoon a long conversation with Mark. Concerning the sad events which had so broken up the family, there was much I was desirous to learn. I could not expect poor Christina to enter on such subjects, nor should I have had courage to make many inquiries of him, had he not led to them himself. The particulars of all that happened I did not until long afterwards acquire; but in order to make my narrative clear, I shall insert at present what I gathered at various times.

Mr Dare's bankruptcy had been caused in a great measure by the imprudence of his daughter and nephew. All they told the Philipsons was repeated to the Brahams, who spread reports in Sydney that his affairs were very seriously involved. Mr Braham was one of his principal creditors, and taking alarm from the representations of his daughters and the Philipsons, he went to Mr Dare for the recovery of a very large debt. He was a Jew, and possessed the sharpness of his nation in looking after his own interest; he was also, perhaps, more uncompromising in this case than was his habit, being actuated by dislike for the family of the man with whom was his transaction.

When it first became generally evident that the Dares could not retain their position in society, Mrs Dare received an anonymous letter, the object of which was to enlighten her on the many follies in which her daughter, during the last year and a half, had engaged. As is common with such malicious epistles, it was written in a tone of pretended friendliness, and among the actions recorded were the robbery of the orange-grove, and the

dressing in masculine attire; the extreme impropriety of the latter proceeding, in case it should fail to strike Mrs Dare, was particularly enlarged on. Mark was likewise mentioned as a participator, but he was passed more lightly over. Mrs Dare was in very weak health at the time; she had led for many years an exceedingly artificial life, spending her days in idleness and self-indulgence, surrounded by luxury; everything that could disturb her had been carefully kept from her; but within the last few months troubles had come upon her suddenly and undisguisedly. Mark's accident and long illness was the beginning, then followed wearing anxiety, to terminate only in yet more painful certainty, respecting her husband's affairs; the present abrupt disclosure of her daughter's misconduct was as the last drop in the cup; she took to bed, and never again rose. This letter was not the immediate cause of her death, but it threw her into a low nervous state, from which small hope was ever held out of her recovery. To the name of her false friend she had no clue, but, from certain expressions, and the formation of certain letters, Christina had no doubt it was Jane Philipson.

Things were in this state at the Pines, when Mr Dare was obliged to go on business to Van Diemen's Land, and it was during his absence that Mark was guilty of the folly of stopping the carriage. He and Philipson on being apprehended were, as I have already said, taken to the lock-up, and a rumour of what had happened reaching the Pines, Albert, at an early hour the following morning, slipped out of the house, and ran down to

the Police Office, hoping to see, or to gain tidings of, his cousin. A considerable crowd was collected round the door, and Albert heard one man remark, "Sure as I am here, they will get a spell at Norfolk Island." It was but an ignorant conjecture, but Albert believed it the inevitable sentence, and he sped home with the intelligence. His mother was in bed, and he burst into her room, exclaiming, "Oh! mamma! mamma! poor Mark is to go to Norfolk Island."

Mrs Dare was very fond of Mark; his little attentions, which she particularly valued, and received from no one else, had completely won her; and this shock was more than she could stand; she was seized on the instant with convulsion fits, and that evening terminated her life.

After her mother's death, Christina was seen nowhere but at church. Mr Hill called several times at the Pines without being admitted, but being desirous of a little conversation with Miss Dare and Mark, he watched his opportunity, and one Sunday he overtook them as they were walking home from afternoon service. Both were in the habit of conversing with him easily, and they spoke with frankness of all that had happened, though he found them in a less satisfactory frame of mind, than from the regularity of their attendance at church he had hoped. His sympathy in their recent bereavement seemed to impart some comfort, but when he proceeded, kindly and sensibly, to urge upon Mark the necessity of strenuously endeavouring to act in such a manner as should regain him the respect of his fellow-creatures,

and retrieve his character from the stain he had brought upon it, the young man answered recklessly that he had no longer anything to hope from a good name; disgraced by an accusation of highway robbery, and disinherited by his father, every avenue of worldly success was closed against him. This was the first that Mr Hill had heard of his being disinherited, and he inquired whether he had no friends who could write to his father, and intercede for him.

"No," replied Mark, "I have no friends, and I would not wish anybody to intercede. I would not thank my father for leaving me a fortune at the entreaty of strangers; besides, Albert will make a better use of it than I should, such a worthless fellow as I am."

Mr Hill observed, that a knowledge of our deficiencies is the road to improvement—"If you know that you are not what you ought to be, Mark, you have made the first step towards amendment. You are yet so young, that it is in your power, with God's blessing, entirely to wipe out the past, to establish for yourself a character, and these faults will be forgotten, or remembered only as the errors of a boy."

"No," replied Mark, "that can never be. All my hopes and prospects are blighted. I must live henceforth by my hands, or by my wits. It is I have marred my cousin's happiness, for I led her into mischief. Our imprudence ruined my uncle, and our bad conduct caused the death of my aunt. Who could bear the burden of so much self-reproach? There are but two courses open to me. I must take either to a harum-

scarum life, and forget it all, or the alternative—hang myself."

"Oh! Mark!" interrupted Christina.

"It is wrong," said Mr Hill, "even to speak of such a thing, though, I trust, you do not think of it; and the life you allude to is not the only alternative—there is another course."

"What?" asked Mark.

"That of repentance," replied Mr Hill, "which, though it may not bring you worldly success, will give you peace of mind here, and lead you to the kingdom of heaven."

Christina's eyes, at these words, as Mr Hill told me, filled with tears. "We do think of heaven," she said—"though we never did while we were happy—and often I wish we were there now."

"I shall never get to heaven," said Mark. "If I am not fit for the society of decent people on earth, much more should I be out of place in heaven. Do you know," he continued, turning to Mr Hill, "what my father and Mr Berry used to prophesy about me? They used to say that I would grow up the disgrace of my family. One of my earliest recollections is of these words being rung in my ears. Now they may have the triumph of knowing that their prophecy was correct!"

"Not at all," exclaimed Mr Hill, with animation. "Prove to them that their prophecy was false,—prove to your father and Mr Berry that, though you were a foolish and misguided boy, you yet may be a wise and

good man,—force them to confess, one day, that you are not the disgrace, but the ornament, of your family."

There was something in the spirit and energy of Mr Hill's tone that inspired a kindred feeling in Mark. A gleam of hope shot from his eye, the first that had kindled there for many a day, and, raising his head, he said, with sudden resolution, "I will; from this day, I abjure bad company, and will apply myself to correct my bad habits. You place before me an object worthy to live for, and I will succeed in it. I will not rest until I have wiped out the past." His eye, as he fixed it on Mr Hill's face, shone clear and bright; the clouds rolled away from his brow, because they rolled away from his heart. I do believe that that moment gave birth to an honourable ambition which since has been nobly carried out.

Oh, blessed words of a good man which can revive hope in the sinking heart! These young creatures, though in the very morning of life, with all its fair promise unfolded before them, were yet among the weary and heavy laden. He, following truly in the footsteps of the Divine Master whose commission he bore, spoke encouragement to the penitent, and comfort to the afflicted.

After this, Mr Hill frequently saw Miss Dare and her cousin. Her father was then confined to bed of the brief illness of which he died. What was its precise nature, I do not know, but I believe that the ruin of his worldly prospects had such an effect on his previously impaired constitution that, when seized with

the influenza—that season prevalent—he sank under the attack. The information I received relative to that distressing period made me again regret the mistake which prevented Albert receiving my letter. I might have been of some use to the family, who already were made to feel their altered circumstances, in the lessened respect of servants, and the slights of their acquaintances. There was no person to take a proper charge of the house, and the domestics, though they attended to their master, shamefully neglected the comfort of the young people. Of all those who, in his prosperity, had partaken of Mr Dare's liberal hospitality, Mr Hill alone stood by him in his adversity, and he alone showed kindness to his orphan children. Among the gay and worldly, there is a natural shrinking from scenes of sorrow, and all, save he, found reason why they were not called to the house which the angel of Death had twice visited; and from none but him had Christina received an offer of even a temporary home or assistance. This she herself told me, and, engrossed as she was with other things, I perceived that this want of sympathy deeply hurt her, so different was it from the professions of interest and regard she had been accustomed to hear. But the desertion of none of their former friends was so palpable as that of the Philipsons, whose conduct was a repetition of the heartlessness they had shown during Mark's long illness. They completely drew off, and whether they were then in Sydney, we did not know. Fresh stories had come out about them,—stories which came to my knowledge at a time they contained no

interest for me, nor could they now have much, except as they elucidate more fully the character of people with whom my unfortunate pupils had for long been intimate.

It happened that, almost immediately after my departure from the Pines, Mr Bernal being in the shop of one of the principal jewellers, the master of the establishment mentioned that he had in his possession a valuable miniature painting, which perhaps some gentleman might like to purchase, though not of a relation, on account of the extreme beauty of the execution. Mr Bernal is fond of the arts, and the miniature was shown to him. What was his astonishment to recognise it as not only a likeness of one of his own relations, but a picture with which he was familiar, having frequently, when a child, seen it in the hands of his aunt, Mrs Torrington; that she had lost it; that it had been stolen by a favourite maid, who afterwards, for other thefts, was convicted and sent to Van Diemen's Land, he was aware; and he asked the jeweller how he obtained it. The man refused to betray the name of the lady who had sold it, saying it was always understood that in such dealings tradesmen were on honour. This much he confessed, that the person resided in a fashionable suburb, and was, he imagined, in fallen circumstances. Mr Bernal bought the miniature at a high price, and from the shop went to call at the Pines, where he mentioned the singular discovery, and produced the picture.

No sooner did Miss Dare see it than she exclaimed, "How extraordinary! Do you say, Mr Bernal, that

this is a relation of yours? Why, it is Mrs Philipson's husband!"

The very portrait which Mrs Philipson had imposed upon us as a likeness of her husband, and which she had endeavoured to persuade us bore so strong a resemblance to some of her own children, in reality being that of the Hon. Mr Torrington. This gentleman was, by marriage, uncle to Mr Bernal, who now saw a solution of the mystery, and was able to throw a light on a very obscure portion of Mrs Philipson's history.

She and her husband had lived in Mrs Torrington's family as lady's-maid and butler, in which respective capacities they were so clever, and gave so much satisfaction, that they were retained in service even after their marriage, and continued high in favour until various pieces of dishonesty coming to light, an entire system of depredation was traced to them, in consequence of which they were tried, convicted, and both were sentenced to seven years' transportation.

Mrs Philipson left behind her two children, a little girl of about six years of age, and a boy not more than two. These Mrs Torrington benevolently continued to patronise, and provided for their being well educated. Had Jane Philipson continued under this influence she might have grown up a truthful and amiable woman, but she was unfortunately removed from it while yet too young to have formed any good principles.

During the voyage out, and while employed in the Factory in Hobart Town, Mrs Philipson conducted herself studiously well. Her husband, from similar

motives of self-interest, likewise behaved as though a reformed character, and at the expiration of the first year they both received their tickets-of-leave. This enabled them to reside together, and to send to England for their children. The spirit-shop, which they set up, brought them in considerable gains, and it was not until Annette, their third child, was seven or eight years old, that Philipson again transgressed, and was sent to Norfolk Island. Left to herself, Mrs Philipson's scheming head contrived the plan of going to Sydney, and passing herself off as a widow lady. Her eldest daughter was handsome, and the second promised to be equally so; she had, therefore, reasonable hopes of advancing them by marriage. Of her unjust gains she had secured to herself, independent of her husband, a very pretty sum; and to increase this to a sufficiency for her purpose, she laboured early and late. As the first step towards raising herself in society, she dropped the Jewish appellation of Levi, resuming her maiden name, and having let the gin-shop to a brother of Mr Braham's, removed to a cottage on the coast, where she eked out her means by dressmaking, a trade to which she had been apprenticed in her youth. Her two elder children were in her confidence, but Annette, having been suffering from severe illness at the time of her father's crime, knew nothing of it, and, as they lived retired, it was probably easy to impose upon her the belief that he was dead. During her childhood she received small attention from her mother, who was too busy and preoccupied to think of her except in connexion with her own plans; the little girl

grew up almost uncared for, the consequence of which was that she was spared much evil knowledge which her brother and sister had imbibed. This it was that preserved Annette comparatively simple and pure-minded in the atmosphere of wickedness by which she was surrounded. Certain faults there were she could not escape; hypocrisy, for instance, was far too much the habit of the house for her not early to learn to disregard truth; cunning she was taught was wisdom, and duplicity the tact requisite in going through life; yet, accustomed as she was to practise a petty deceit, I believe that Annette would any day have shrunk from the deliberate falsehoods which her mother, brother, and sister told without remorse.

Augustus Philipson, when about fourteen, chanced to render essential service to a naval officer, who, while bathing in the harbour, was seized with cramp, and would probably have sunk but for his exertions. Being questioned by the gentleman, Philipson artfully represented himself as the son of a widow lady of respectable family, but in straitened circumstances, and that he had a great wish to enter the navy. The officer used his interest for him, and as he was an intelligent, active, and well-grown boy, he was received on board the *Sea Serpent*, which was about to proceed to the Indian seas.

Such an opening for her son was beyond even Mrs Philipson's hopes, and doubtless it materially aided her plans. With all her industry, however, it was not for several years, and until Jane was past the flower of her youth, that she was able to put them in execution.

Here, then, is the whole history of this clever, ambitious, and misguided woman. Assuredly for long she gloried in her apparent success; but her house was founded upon the sand, and great was the fall of it.

Now, to leave Mrs Philipson's affairs, and return to those of my pupil:—On the evening after her two ill-fated applications as governess she looked worn-out and pale, and I persuaded her to lie down a while. Mr Hill had been for the last week laid up with influenza, which prevented him continuing his visits to the Pines, but this afternoon he called. Christina had fallen asleep, and I would not disturb her, so I went alone to see him. There was no room where I could invite him to sit down, but he said he wished to have a little conversation with me, and asked if he might step into one of the dismantled apartments. As we entered the large empty drawing-room, which we both had been accustomed to behold so different—filled with company, and the walls adorned with pictures and elegant hangings—I heard him sigh. He walked, however, to the upper end of the room, and, leaning against the mantelpiece, opened the conversation. Most kindly he expressed pleasure at seeing me, and inquired after my brother, but it was of the Dares we chiefly spoke. He informed me that he was very anxious to induce Christina and Mark to accept the shelter of his roof; and as Mrs Hill was still absent with Fanny, he thought it would be a good thing if I would consent to make my home, while in Sydney, in his house; Christina might be willing to accompany me, though she had hitherto refused his invitations; the

creditors would not allow her to remain much longer at the Pines, and it was indeed anything but desirable that she should continue there on sufferance. As far as I was concerned I would have accepted the offer unhesitatingly, but I had doubts of Christina's concurrence in any plan that bore the semblance of dependence. I told him of my wish that she should live with us, and of her determination to gain, if possible, her own livelihood. He honoured the spirit of the poor girl, but replied that she would, he feared, have great difficulties to contend with.

We had spent about half-an-hour together when Mark's step crossed the hall. I went out to warn him not to awake his cousin, and hearing that Mr Hill was in the drawing-room he returned with me. His deportment was, under circumstances, most becoming; grave and quiet he was, but not depressed. There was a point, he said, on which he desired to hear Mr Hill's opinion; he had puzzled his mind about it, and was unable to decide. Thinking this was a hint that he would rather speak in private, I turned towards the door, but Mark interposed, "Don't go away on my account, Miss Norris. Who has a right, if you have not, to hear of my affairs?" Then addressing Mr Hill he continued, "I have been looking out for a situation as overseer, and I find that Mr Lyall is in want of one. By applying to him I have little doubt I could obtain the berth; but I should be happier anywhere than on Stanley Downs, especially with a person I know. Is that feeling, will you tell me, a blamable pride?"

Mr Hill's reply I shall not attempt to repeat. I should do injustice to the good sense and consideration with which it was expressed; but the effect was to relieve Mark from any scruples he may have entertained as to the propriety of indulging a feeling which, if pride, was only of a very natural and blameless description. Mark was, he said, glad of the sanction of Mr Hill's opinion, for he honestly believed he would do better elsewhere than in the employment of a former acquaintance. "I know," he observed, "that I should always be suspecting insults where none were meant; but among strangers no one will suppose I ever occupied a better position." That, I thought, as I looked at the peculiarly gentlemanly young man, is hardly probable, and a similar reflection was perhaps in Mr Hill's mind, for he said, "You could, I should think, without much difficulty, procure a situation in another district; but is that the only means of livelihood open to you? If application were made to the Governor, might you not obtain employment in one of the Government offices?"

"No," replied Mark, "I know my deficiencies too well. I am not fit to compete with young men who have benefited by their education. I might, to be sure, get as junior clerk into some merchant's office, but that would be more galling still to one's pride; and if Christina will consent to go with Miss Norris, so that I do not feel that I ought to stay in Sydney for the sake of looking after her as far as I can, I would rather be in the bush. Oh, we shall do very well, and if I were only fortunate enough to get a berth near them, we might be quite happy."

When I returned to the garret, I was glad to find Miss Dare still asleep, for though she was not a girl, I knew, to be frightened, if she woke and found herself alone, I thought she might wonder what had become of me. It was quite evening when she rose, and I was recounting to her portions of my conversation with Mr Hill, when Mark came into the room and informed me, rather to my surprise, that Joseph was below in the verandah, and wished to know if he could see me. I requested Mr Mark to stay with his cousin during the few minutes I should be away, but Christina said she must go herself and speak to my brother. She felt refreshed with her sleep, and would like to shake hands with him. They both accompanied me down-stairs, but did not remain with us, though Miss Dare begged I would not hurry back on her account, and Mark was so obliging as fetch us a couple of chairs into the verandah.

Joseph had arrived at Wollongong the very day on which I left. There he learned all that had happened in our cousin's family, and I rejoiced to find that the very plan I proposed had already occurred to him. He was quite as anxious as I expected that Christina should accept a home with us, and looked unfeignedly disappointed when told of her firmness in refusing. It was necessary that she should make now her irrevocable decision, as the steamer for —— sailed in three days, and accommodation must be secured beforehand. He had made preparations for the land journey, and had procured for the purpose a light-covered cart, which was the best vehicle to travel in over roads so bad that an ordi-

nary carriage (had we possessed one) must have been shattered to pieces. The prospect this suggested was not very pleasing, and were it not that my thoughts, ever since I entered the house, had centered in Christina, I should have had some nervous fears on my own account. But these arrangements brought vividly before me the friendless situation of that poor girl, and at the moment I thought only of her. To induce her to accompany us I resolved to make one more effort, and my brother promised to call in the morning to hear the result of the endeavour. I had, however, no new inducements to bring forward. Following up those to which I had already resorted, with the wishes and advice of my brother, was all I could do. There appeared, at least so I interpreted her countenance, a struggle in her mind, and for a moment I thought I was going to prevail, but the hope was speedily crushed, as her face resumed its resolute expression; and when Joseph called I was forced to tell him that only one berth was required in the ladies' cabin.

In the midst of all this distress there was one little alleviation for poor Christina, and her heart, open to the smallest kindness, she valued the proof that *all* her acquaintances had not, as she supposed, forgotten her.

Mr and Mrs Bernal returned from their wedding trip, and one evening the latter called; being refused admittance, she gave in a note for Christina, pressing her to pay her a long visit. The invitation was delicately given, and was so affectionate and so earnest that I thought Miss Dare would not be able to withstand her;

but Christina had too proud a spirit to consent to be under an obligation to a person on whom she had no claim save that of mutual regard, though she was not too proud to acknowledge how deeply she felt the kindness, and her note in reply was eloquent in its gratitude. In order, I believe, to give me an opportunity of seeing Mrs Bernal once more, she requested me to be the bearer of the answer.

There was also some interest shown for her from another and unexpected quarter, and for some time we were very much puzzled who could be the writer of a note she received, either the same or the following day, containing a kind invitation to the bush. It was dated from a station with a very unpronounceable name, and was signed Emily Fitz-Allen. Christina had never heard of such a person. The lady, however, was evidently well acquainted with her, and assured her that though she had no fancy for the bush, she would find it very agreeable. Her husband, she went on to say, would be in Sydney in the course of a few weeks, and she hoped Miss Dare would put herself under his care, he would be happy to take charge of her on the journey. The note was not elegantly expressed, but it gave the idea of great sincerity. When Mark joined us, he was asked if he knew any person of the name of Fitz-Allen.

"There is a squatter in New England of the name," replied Mark, "whom I knew slightly."

"And whom did he marry?" said Christina.

"I don't know that he is married; he was not when I knew him."

Christina gave her cousin the note to read, and at last he threw some light upon the mystery.

"I think," said he, "it must be one of the Lyalls; he was intimate with them, and I have an indistinct recollection of hearing that 'Jack' is married. Oh! no doubt that is it, Emily, the very name."

This conjecture proved the true one, nor was it wonderful that the marriage, taking place when it did, had either not been heard of by Christina, or made no impression upon her. She returned a grateful acknowledgment, but said it would not suit her plans at present to accept the kind invitation.

What a lesson was this against judging from appearances! How few who in prosperity only had known Miss Lyall would have taken her to be anything more than a blunt-mannered, good-tempered girl, yet beneath that unpolished exterior how much kind and generous feeling must have existed to induce her to come forward thus readily to an acquaintance in misfortune.

While we were sitting at breakfast the last day I heard my brother's voice in the hall, the room was tolerably neat, and Christina glancing round, asked if I thought he would walk up. I accordingly invited him, and Miss Dare went to the door to receive him, but as he was accommodated with an empty *tea-box* for a seat, she looked rather embarrassed, and with painful hesitation inquired whether he had breakfasted. He replied in the affirmative, and I, wishing to dissipate the appearance of constraint which sat upon us all, observed,

"You are early astir this morning, Joseph. What brings you here?"

"I came to see if you were inclined to walk down to the wharf, Sarah," he replied. "The steamer is lying there, and if Miss Dare will not object to your leaving her for a short time, perhaps you might like to see your accommodation; we shall not be away above an hour."

Christina begged me to go, but when I suggested that a little walk would do her good, she declined accompanying us. As I arranged my shawl, Joseph said—

"Dear Miss Dare, how I wish you would allow us to secure a berth for you."

Christina only shook her head.

I effected the little arrangements necessary on board, but with a very heavy heart. The sight of the vessel realised my approaching departure. Though cowardly as I believe I am by nature, the fears were in no degree on my own account,—it was not that I was going to an uninhabited land, to brave unknown hardships, that oppressed me with an almost insupportable load of melancholy, as I retraced alone my steps towards the Pines; but I felt that in leaving Miss Dare, a young, inexperienced girl, to struggle for her very bread, without a protector, almost without friends, without even formed principles, I was abandoning a charge which Heaven had made mine. What was likely to be her fate was hidden from me, what it might be I trembled to think.

At the entrance of King Street, I met Mr Mark Dare. He had been to the *Herald's* office to learn if there was any answer to his cousin's advertisement. There was

none; and as he imparted to me the disappointing intelligence, he said, "God help her. What is she to do? There is now nothing for her but to look out for a place as attendant to some lady."

By the paper of that morning he perceived that a squatter, whose station was not above ten miles from Joseph's residence, was advertising for a superintendent. Were his cousin provided for, so that he considered himself at liberty to quit Sydney, nothing, he said, would please him so well as to obtain the situation, for to be within reach of us would be comfort almost greater than he deserved. In spite of the painful uncertainty of his affairs, his conversation was hopeful, and insensibly did me good. From his example, I began to look on the brighter side of things, until a most unpleasant rencounter again deprived me of the small degree of cheerfulness I had just managed to attain. At a turn in the street, which brought us so close upon each other that she could not feign not to observe us, we met Jane Philipson. She was alone, and her face assumed a scornful expression as she addressed us, "Ah! Miss Norris, so you have returned to Sydney. I suppose, Mark, you did not see Augustus before he went to California? We are probably going home, Annette and Delafield write so pressingly to mamma to come and live with them. So, you and Christina are going to the bush!" I interrupted her to say that Miss Dare was not going, but without regarding me, she ran on with her heartless string of words—"What a rich man you will become! I can't say I envy you, though. We have

had many a laugh about your being a bushman. Well, give my love to Christina, and tell her to write me all the news," and, offering the tips of her fingers to Mark, and nodding carelessly to me, she went on her way.

"So that is all she cares for Christina," observed Mark; "requests she will write to her, and does not say whether to direct to Sydney, Hobart Town, or, goodness knows where, in England!"

After this it was in vain I attempted to rally, and when I entered the garret, and saw Christina's pale, anxious face, I sank into a chair and fairly gave way. Christina rose and stood beside me, desiring to know what was the matter. I could not explain all that was in my heart, and she supposed me to be unnerved by fears respecting my new life. She tried to encourage me, saying, that some ladies liked the bush very much, and mentioned, as an example, our acquaintance, Mrs Lyall. This gave me a new idea. "It is the loneliness I dread," said I. "Everything else I might like; but, well as I love my brother, I cannot reconcile my mind to living in a place where, except a servant, there is not another woman within miles. Oh, Miss Dare, how different it would be if you were going with me!"

Miss Dare looked at me keenly—"Miss Norris, you do not think so, really? You know I would be an intolerable burden on you and your brother."

I raised my head. Whatever might be my chief reasons for wishing her to accompany us, the idea that she would be a burden was too utterly false for me to allow her to retain it, and I said, "My dearest Chris-

tina, you would be the greatest of comforts and blessings to me."

There was, I suppose, something in my tone which carried conviction more than all the arguments I had previously used, for, after a moment, she exclaimed, "In that case, I may do as I have been wishing all along—oh, more than I can tell!—I may go with you!" Then, throwing her arms round me, she added, while tears rushed to her eyes, "How grateful ought I to be to Heaven that has given me so true a friend!"

I was now so much easier in my mind that I felt, by comparison, quite happy, and it was with a feeling akin to pleasure that I set out to make my call on Mrs Bernal, to deliver Miss Dare's note, and to offer, in one, my congratulations and adieus.

I found Louisa in a very nice house, surrounded by comfort and elegance. The impression which this made upon me, I cannot exactly define, but the sight of her happiness certainly brought very strikingly before me the desolation of my beloved pupil, though the manner in which Louisa asked after both her young friends, Christina especially, was soothing to my feelings. Hers were not the cold, measured inquiries of politeness, but expressions, warm from the heart, of true interest and affection. She regretted sincerely the refusal the note contained, saying, that she had quite reckoned on her invitation being accepted; when, however, I mentioned that Miss Dare had consented to live with me, she observed that, in that case, she had no right to complain, for I had the first claim as a relation and older friend. In

the course of this call, I had opportunity to remark that Louisa had acquired, since I had last seen her, a superior degree of reflection and consideration. Considerate of others, so far, she had ever been, but at home, with Mr and Mrs Hill, and, contrasted with the precocious seriousness of her sister, she had sometimes appeared heedless; while now, in the anxiety she expressed, not only for her former companions, but for the comfort of my brother and myself, were indications of thought which showed the opening of her mind under the influence of new duties. At her request, I detailed my plans, and described what I supposed would be the routine of our life. She expressed a hope that I would find the bush pleasant, and then observed—

"Miss Norris, I have a favour to ask. Do not suppose that I wish to deprive you of Christina's company, but you know of what a restless disposition she is, so will you, if at any time she seems tiring of the monotony, and longing for a change, write to me and I will ask her here. Do not," she continued, in her gentle, lively tone, which was so pretty, "think that I am taking too much upon myself, for I am aware of what Arthur's wishes are. He hoped, nearly as much as I did, that she would pay us a visit, and will, I am sure, be hardly less sorry when he hears she has refused. So you must give me your promise."

I did give my promise, and so confident was I of the sincerity in which it was asked, that I felt I could act upon it, should occasion offer, without fear of being thought forward.

Before I left home, Christina had informed Mark of her altered resolution, and he had immediately set out to apply for the overseer's place. When I reached the Pines, they were conversing so cheerfully, that I at once guessed he had been successful; and as I entered the room, Mark's bright smile, and Christina's exclamation, "Now, we shall all go together," imparted more than the wished-for assurance.

The application had been to the gentleman in person, he, fortunately, happening to be in Sydney, and both parties were mutually satisfied. The route, as far as my brother's residence, was the same for Mark as for ourselves. He was therefore able to go with us, which, as he was more conversant than Joseph with bush travelling, was to us an advantage as well as pleasure. The remainder of the day sufficed to complete the few arrangements he and Miss Dare required, and the following evening we sailed from Sydney.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOME IN THE BUSH.

OUR voyage was prosperous, the land journey so also, no accident occurred, though many disagreeables were inevitable from the badness of the roads and the roughness of the vehicle in which we travelled: of such roads, indeed, people in England can scarcely form a conception, and at the first creek we crossed I doubted not that the necks of some of the party would be broken. When, however, we had gone in safety over two or three gullies, I perceived that both men and horses knew what they were about, and that there was less danger than appeared. At the conclusion of the first day's journey we reached one of the way-side huts, called by courtesy an inn; but we were not always able to accomplish the stages, and once or twice were obliged to camp out. The gentlemen, I believe, preferred this, for Christina and myself, wretched as were the houses of accommodation, we liked a roof over our heads.

The monotony of the scenery contributed to make the way seem long, though my brother pointed out

every little object of interest, and Mark, who was on horseback, being intrusted with one of his employer's horses, frequently rode up to the cart to refresh us with a little conversation. There was, however, little to vary the apparently interminable forest of gum trees, which, with their scanty foliage, presented a peculiarly cheerless prospect, and truly glad was I when, towards the evening of the fifth day, Joseph told us the house was in sight. Christina pressed forward, and I looked eagerly in the direction he indicated. Through the trees we discerned a low building destitute of any enclosure or signs of surrounding cultivation, and involuntary I said, "Why, Joseph, I thought your house stood in a garden?"

"It is to stand in a garden," was the reply, "but the garden has to be made."

A clergyman's house, even in a very remote part of the bush, is never quite isolated from other human habitations, as is the case with many a sheep or cattle station. With the limited means at his command, he would have no mode of supplying the daily wants of life. Accordingly, as I had been told, Joseph's new residence stood on the outskirts of a recently-formed township, and this circumstance I had once mentioned to Mr Hill, adding some remark on the convenience of being near a town.

In reply, he smiled, and observed, "I suspect you will not find the town a very large one."

Of these words I did not at the time understand fully the significance, nor that of the smile which accom-

panied them, but both recurred to my memory as we now drove up, and the real character of an Australian township beyond the boundaries broke upon my mind. I saw a few, perhaps half a dozen, one-storied slab-built cottages, standing at unequal distances from each other; the largest of these, licensed as a public-house, carried on, I subsequently found, only too flourishing a business, much to the detriment of the neighbourhood; another was termed the store, and contained a miscellaneous supply of the common articles of domestic use. There were also a smithy, a butcher's shop, and a dairy, but not a single resident approaching in social position the squatters, who form the aristocracy of country districts. The clergyman's house was intended to be about the best in the township, being well built and of tolerable size; but, beyond the mere erection, everything remained to be done by ourselves. By the time we arrived, however, I was so knocked up, so exhausted by sheer bodily fatigue, that I thought only of the comfort of having reached our destination; the sun had given me a severe headache, and I grew giddy as soon as I alighted. I however gained the sitting-room, and observed, "How thankful I am to be at home!" One glance merely I cast round, and fainted.

I was some little time insensible, and when I came to myself it was Mark's voice I first heard.

"The fire will burn up directly, Christina."

And Miss Dare replied, "Very well, then, I will make her some tea, poor thing; she is only tired, not, I think, unhappy."

I sat up, and recalling my last words, again looked round, but to what a home had we come! The rafters were uncovered, the walls bare, and admitting daylight between the slabs. To Christina the shock was, no doubt, great, but she and Mark were, as usual, making the best of things, and it would have been disgraceful in me to yield to depression. Mark was on his knees kindling a fire on a wide open stone hearth, and Christina dividing her attention between myself and the packages we had brought with us.

"Are you not very much fatigued, Miss Dare, my dear?" said I.

"Oh, no, not at all; and you will be quite fresh when you have had some tea."

Joseph was engaged about the horse and cart, and as soon as I felt my head sufficiently steady to walk, I retired to the apartment that was to be my bedroom. There I was joined in a short time by Christina, who brought me some tea in a tin pint, and a piece of damper. Homely as was the refreshment, I was glad of it; and as I sipped the somewhat acrid beverage, she gave a laughing account of the difficulty she had experienced in coming to a mutual understanding with the female whom Joseph had engaged as servant. Christina had asked for a cup of tea, such a luxury as a cup was unknown on the premises; she had next requested, for my benefit, a slice of toast, at which the bush dame stared a moment, then observed,

"Sure, you 'll no be for toasting the damper?"

"But," said Miss Dare, in conclusion, "we will soon

have things very different from this, unless indeed all the china has been smashed on the journey."

The first evening, as is generally the case in the midst of bustle and novelty, passed quickly. We were all glad to go early to bed, and at sunrise the following morning Mark left us for Mr Hay's station, leaving us to settle in our new abode. A heavy heart had Christina, I could see, at parting with him, but she struggled to keep up her spirits, and when I commenced my household arrangements, I could not have had a more able assistant.

The life of a clergyman in the interior of Australia is very different from that of an English rector or curate. His duty principally consists in visiting, in rotation, the various stations of the district, within a circle of perhaps seventy miles, which journeys he probably makes on horseback. At each station he performs divine service, though it be on a week-day; administers the sacrament, and ought to visit and converse with the shepherds and bullock-drivers in their huts. To discharge efficiently such pastoral duties it may be seen that peculiar gifts are requisite. He should be a man above regarding petty forms; his Christianity should be somewhat of the muscular type, and he should ever bear in mind that if those poor men with whom he is brought in contact are leading, many of them, heathen lives, it is scarcely their own fault, in a place where they never hear the sound of church-bells, and where, it may be, the Sabbath is only marked as a day on which they have leisure for the amusements of shooting or kangaroo-hunting. I do not

mean that the master of a station does not, in most cases, do what he can to encourage an observance of the Sunday, but the ministrations of a clergyman of course carry greater weight. My brother devoted himself energetically to the duties of his extensive parish, and he liked the life. In England his health had been delicate, while here, though almost constantly in the saddle, he gained so much in strength and seemed so happy that I saw the greatest reason to rejoice that we had been directed to seek our fortunes in Australia. When at home, he was as active as either Christina or myself in endeavouring to improve our rude dwelling, and ere long, by our united efforts, we had succeeded in surrounding ourselves with something of English neatness and comfort.

It was evident that Christina felt deeply the change in her own lot, yet even she obtained, if not happiness, at least peace and contentment in endeavouring to submit to it with cheerfulness, and to do what she knew was right. She gave her thoughts to her daily duties, to the comfort of others, to the improvement of her own character, and none, I am sure, ever worshipped with a sincerer heart than she joined in the prayer which, each night and morning, hallowed our home in the wilderness.

Time passed unmarked, the very monotony of the days assisting to make them glide away in the absence of all amusement, with a rapidity which, on looking back, is surprising. Joseph went and came, and often our little circle was very pleasant.

There was as yet no regular post our way. We therefore seldom got either letters or newspapers, except by the hand of some chance traveller. A few weeks after our arrival, however, Miss Dare received a nice letter from her brother, full of affectionate regrets that he had not seen her before her departure. He said that Mrs Hill and Mrs Bernal were very kind to him, but nothing could compensate for the loss of Christina, and Mark, and Miss Norris. The tone of the letter showed that, in his own worldly prosperity, he was not forgetting the misfortunes which had involved his family.

At the same time I received a letter from Mrs Bernal, in which she gave us much Sydney news, and to people cut off, as we were, from all connexion with society, it was considerate to relate what was taking place in the world. Albert, she mentioned, was spending the vacation at her house. She thought him very much improved, growing more like her dear friend Christina, for which she liked him all the better. He told her that his uncle gave him a large allowance, and he was saving it all up for an object. What the object was, was a secret, but it was clearly something in which he was much interested, for he seemed never to spend a penny he could help on himself. Louisa supposed that his sister was by and by to benefit by his economy.

We saw meanwhile nothing of Mark; for though the distance was not so great but that he might have occasionally ridden over, his business prevented him leaving Warra, (the name of Mr Hay's station,) but we had more than one visit from his employer, who spoke of him in

the highest terms, and seemed perfectly aware that Mark had been reduced by adversity to his present position.

Mr Hay was an unmarried man, but his mother resided with him, and this lady, with the hospitality which is an agreeable feature in bush life, sent us a very pressing invitation to visit her. Twenty miles over a very rough road, or rather no road at all, was somewhat of an undertaking; but Christina and I had seen no lady since we left Sydney, and we felt that to make acquaintance with Mrs Hay would be a very great pleasure, one for which it was worth undergoing some fatigue. So as Joseph was going over at any rate to perform service at the station, we took advantage of the opportunity, and once more our cart was put in requisition.

The head station at Warra conveyed a pleasing impression of what a bush habitation may be. The house, though built of wood, and in the cottage style, possessed ample accommodation, and was well and even elegantly furnished. The garden abounded in flowers and fruit,—grapes, peaches, pine-apples, melons, of which we were most liberally given seeds and cuttings; and in the neat and well-ordered establishment there was nothing left to be desired.

Mark was present at dinner the first evening, and at breakfast on Sunday morning, having been asked out of compliment to us, but he then went about his business until the hour of divine worship. For that purpose we assembled in the wool-shed, at a little distance from the house, to the number of about five-and-twenty, and to

me there was something touching in the sight of that little congregation, consisting for the most part of very rough, sun-burnt men, met together to worship God in the wilderness.

When Joseph's plain and practical sermon was concluded, and all had dispersed after the final blessing, Mark joined us. His hut was close at hand, and Christina insisted on visiting it. Mark hesitated, as if half reluctant, but his cousin was not to be put off.

"You must not expect to find me so well lodged as Mr Hay," he observed, as he led the way, "and I assure you I am very comfortable."

My expectations were not very highly raised, for I had experience enough of the bush by this time to guide me, in some degree, in the idea I formed of a bachelor's hut, but I was not prepared for the total absence of comfort, and even of what may be called the necessaries of civilised life. Two boxes, placed one on top of the other, acted as table, a sheet of bark served for a bed, and a rough bench completed the furniture.

"So this is your house, poor Mark!" exclaimed Christina, in a tone of feeling I had seldom heard from her.

"It looks rather bad at present, I confess," replied Mark, carelessly, "but it really does not signify what kind of a house I have, I am so little indoors; by and by it will be better. When I have leisure I intend to make a table and a few chairs."

There were in the room one or two unfinished articles of furniture, and Christina asked if they were his work.

"I began those," he replied, "but the only time I have to work is the evening, and then I am so tired, with being out all day, riding about in the sun, that I am generally more inclined to sleep than do anything."

"You sleep, now," observed Christina, with a half malicious smile. "When you are more thoroughly a bushman you will sit at your door and smoke, smoke yourself into a state of oblivion."

"No," said Mark, "I have made a resolution against tobacco. I don't smoke at all as yet, and I intend not to acquire the habit; it is a thing easier to avoid altogether than to indulge in in moderation. But I am not doing the honours as I ought, I am afraid I am getting barbarous already; I must give you some tea."

"Do," said his cousin, "produce your pint pots."

"Don't insult me, Miss Dare, I'll produce my china."

He opened a rude cupboard, and took out, with mock ostentation, some very elegant china cups, which he arranged on the afore-mentioned table.

"These were a present from Albert," said he, "poor fellow! It was very kind of him, he did not know how much they would be out of place."

He glanced round, and laughed heartily. Christina laughed also, but it cost her a more visible effort, and she moved away to the window, (so called, though it was only an opening in the slabs.)

A vast, boundless plain lay stretched in front, and without speaking, she gazed on it. Forgetting Albert

and his gift, both Mark and I followed her with our eyes. At last she said, "Does not this put you in mind of the fortune that was foretold?"

"Oh, nonsense," exclaimed Mark, quickly. "You are surely not becoming superstitious, Christina?"

"But is it not very like?" said she; "just come here and look out."

"I know the view well," replied Mark, but he was beside her in an instant.

"I do not understand," said I, "what you are both talking about?"

"Do not you remember," replied Christina, impressively, "the fate that was read for both Mark and me on Shrove-Tuesday? Is it not like? the wide, desolate prospect! And here," she added, touching one of the cups, "is proof that Albert's fortune was also true."

I scarcely knew what to say, for that there was a resemblance I could not deny. I could only observe, "There may be a coincidence, but it would be weakness to imagine it anything more."

"It is odd," said Mark, and he paused. "But you know," he added, "after all it must be nonsense, for to complete the prophecy I should have been married within the year."

He spoke lightly, and Christina, taking the tone from him, shook off her gravity.

"Oh! you made over your fortune to Sir Lawrence, when you gave him the ring."

"Just as well I did," rejoined Mark, "at least if Annette was the wife I was to get; but that shows it is

nothing more than what Miss Norris calls a coincidence. It is folly to believe in destiny."

"Yes, in the way we are speaking of," said Christina, "and yet it is a great comfort to believe that nothing can happen to us but what is ordered."

"By goodness and wisdom," added Mark.

The visit to Warra was an agreeable little event, and independent of the pleasure and variety it afforded, it was a real comfort to me to feel that in this distant part Christina had another female friend, besides myself, so that should it please God to call me suddenly away, she would not be left entirely without a protector.

The next incident was a visit from Mark; he was going to fetch some cattle which had strayed to a neighbouring run, and passed the night on his way at our house. Joseph was from home, and Mark made his appearance half an hour before tea, as Christina and I were busy unpacking some useful articles for which we had sent to Sydney. Our house was not yet so well appointed but that we were deficient in many of the requisites for domestic comfort, and I was glad to see various kitchen utensils, for want of which we were badly off. But there was one thing of which we were unable to divine the use, a large roll of coarse unbleached calico; the texture and quantity were proof against its being designed for clothing, and we were completely at a loss until Mark solved the mystery by informing us that it was for papering the room.

"Papering the room, Mark!" repeated Christina, laughing, "are you become an Irishman?"

Nor did I think his guess at all plausible.

"It is the way rooms in the bush are frequently lined," said Mark, "you saw it at Mr Hay's?"

"Excuse me, Mr Hay's sitting-room is nicely painted."

"So will yours be when you paint the cloth, that is the way; believe me, that is what this calico is intended for; if you like I will put it up for you—begin at all events."

"I suppose you are right," said I, "this must be what it is intended for, so I shall be obliged to you to show us how to put it up, only don't begin just now, if you please, for we are going to have tea."

As soon as tea was over, Mark insisted on setting to work; he had hardly commenced, and Christina and I were measuring widths, when our ears were assailed by a violent barking among the dogs outside.

"There is a visitor for you, Miss Norris," said Mark.

"I am afraid it is, and this roll of cloth on the floor! it is very unfortunate."

"Pooh, the roll of cloth is rather creditable, shows the house is undergoing improvement; but as Mr Norris is not here, shall I go out and see who it is?"

He went, and returned in a few minutes ushering in Mr Lyall.

This was a most unlooked-for guest, and although I had been but very slightly acquainted with Mr Lyall in Sydney, I received him almost as a friend. He however spoke to us hurriedly, was very grave, and, after a short interval requested to speak with Mark in private. We knew his station was on Stanley Downs, so he had prob-

Here was indeed good news of Philipson, and after reading his letter I felt that I could never again despair of any one.

And now I have brought my reminiscences quite up to the present time. It is delightful to visit Christina in her own nice home, and though with her has departed its chief brightness from ours, I am reconciled to lose her, so truly do she and Mark make the happiness of each other.

When I reflect on these two young people as they now are, and compare them with what they were a few short years ago, I can hardly believe they are the same. I see them going about their daily duties with a singleness of purpose that elevates and sanctifies the most ordinary; I see them deriving from experience its best lessons, and making every error of the past subservient to their present good. Truly to be even rejoiced in is the adversity that has worked such wonders in Mark and Christina. They have come like refined gold out of the fire. May God bless them both, here and hereafter!

THE END.

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